

**THE INTERSECTING SOCIAL IDENTITIES OF CANADIAN
NATIONAL TEAM FEMALE BOXERS**

by

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Abstract

Understanding athletes as whole person through the lens of social identities is an emerging line of inquiry in both the academic and practical fields, within sport psychology (Schinke & McGannon, 2015). Social identities can be represented as socially constructed and group-based conceptions that people are categorized within multiple social groups, such as gender, race, sexuality, class, education, age, ethnicity, and disability, which constituting each person as who they are and how they relate to the outside world (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon & Fisher, 2014). In the previous research, researchers portrayed athletes only through the role-based athletic identity (Ronkainen, Kavoura, & Ryba, 2016). Utilizing social constructionism, in the current dissertation, identities were conceptualized as multifaceted, fluid, performative, and contextually contingent products of cultural narratives and discourses (Schinke & McGannon, 2015), saturated with power, making individuals privileged in certain cultural discourses while subordinated in others (Collins, 2000). To develop an understanding of complexity and multiplicity of athletes, I integrated an intersectionality framework to investigate how do athletes engage in the sport team with multiple aspects of selves within the Canadian National Female Boxing Team. The research questions were structured as: (1) How do the national female boxers construct multiple social identities in boxing? (2) What social identities are privileged and what are subordinated on the Canadian National Boxing Team? (3) What are the implications of the various culturally constructed social identities and associated meanings for female boxers' sport experience and wellbeing? Ten national female boxers participated in this research. Art-based method and conversational interview were employed to facilitate rich storied accounts around social identities

(Smith, 1999). Interpretive thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2016) and creative nonfiction inquiry (Smith & McGannon, 2015) were used to organize the data around research questions. Based on the stories and experiences athletes shared, nine social identities were identified as salient and meaningful to athletes' sport experience on the National Team context, where the patriarchal, whiteness-centered; and pragmatic discourses inform the identity inequality issues on the team. The identities were coalesced into three groups (gender-sexuality-physicality, race and ethnicity- language-religion, and socioeconomic status-weight categories- the athletic level) for analysis. Seven vignettes were presented to show the different social realities that athletes constructed pertaining to these social identities. Following the CSP agenda, the current project aims to empower marginalized identities and to build up a culturally inclusive sport environment. Five conclusions were generated around the intersectionality of athletes' social identities, with the practical implications, recommendations, and interventions were presented correspondingly.

Keywords: Intersectionality, social identities, female boxer, culture sport psychology, cultural praxis, arts-based method, creative nonfiction inquiry

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Table of Contents

Thesis Defence Committee/Comité de soutenance de thèse.....	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgement	v
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
List of Appendices	xii
Preface.....	xiii
Chapter One	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.1.1 The holistic view towards athletes' identities.....	4
1.1.2 Expanding research on female boxers.	8
1.1.3 Situating the project.....	11
1.1.4 Theoretical contributions.....	13
1.1.5 Practical implications.	16
1.1.6 Research questions.	18
1.1.7 Definitions.	19
Chapter Two.....	25
2.1 Cultural Sport Psychology	25
2.1.1 The cultural turn in sport psychology.....	25
2.1.2 The emergence of CSP.	29
2.2 Identity	39
2.2.1 Narrative identity and discursive identity.....	42

2.2.2 The identity issues in sport	46
2.3 Intersectionality.....	51
2.3.1 Intersectionality in feminist studies.....	51
2.3.2 Intersectionality studies in sport.....	59
2.4 Summary of Contentious Issues.....	64
Chapter Three.....	67
3.1 The Social Constructionist Qualitative Inquiry.....	67
3.1.1 The social constructionism epistemology.....	67
3.1.2 Qualitative inquiry.....	68
3.2 The Research Context	70
3.3 Researcher Reflexivity.....	71
3.3.1A personal introduction.....	72
3.3.2 My discomfort zones.....	82
3.4 Data Collection	84
3.4.1 Arts-based methods.....	84
3.4.2 Conversational interviews.....	87
3.5 Data Analysis	89
3.5.1 Inductive thematic analysis.....	89
3.5.2 Creative nonfiction inquiry- Composite vignette.....	91
3.6 Authenticity.....	95
3.7 Forthcoming Structure of the Results	97
Chapter Four	100
4.1 Artworks and Meanings.....	100
4.1.1 The artwork of MS and its meaning.....	100
4.1.2 The artwork of MB and its meaning.....	102

4.1.3 The artwork of AG and its meaning.	103
4.1.4 The artwork of CV and its meaning.	105
4.1.5 The artwork of AF and its meaning.	106
4.2 Summary	108
Chapter Five.....	109
5.1 Result	109
5.1.1 Fitting into the masculine sport context.....	109
5.1.2 Challenges in the masculine sport context.....	115
5.2 General Discussion	120
Chapter Six.....	124
6.1 Result	124
6.1.1 Being “different” as the ethnic minority on the team.	124
6.1.2 French-English divisions on National Team.	133
6.1.3 Religion is an important but personal thing.	140
6.2 General Discussion	150
Chapter Seven	154
7.1 Result	154
7.1.1 Rising up to a superstar.	154
7.1.2 One Canada, two teams.	164
7.2 General Discussion	177
Chapter Eight	180
8.1 Generating Knowledge about Intersectionality of Athletes’ Identities.....	180
8.1.1 Conclusion one: athletes are multifaceted cultural beings.....	183

8.1.2 Conclusion two: the intersecting social identities situate athletes within the interlocking power relations.	186
8.1.3 Conclusion three: power and significance of identities are contingent on time and context.	188
8.1.4 Conclusion four: athletes construct the world differently according to their identity positions.....	191
8.1.5 Conclusion five: The athletes and the subculture of sport interactively constitute each other.	193
8.2 Reflections: Doing an Interdisciplinary Research.....	196
8.3 The Limitations and Implications for Future CSP Research	199
References	205
Appendices.....	243
Appendix A Participant Consent Form	243
Appendix B Ethics Approval Forms	246

List of Tables

Table 1: Themes and Subthemes for the Vignette- Fitting into the Masculine Sport	
Context.....	109
Table 2: Themes and Subthemes of Negotiating the Femininity in the Masculine Sport	
Context.....	115
Table 3: Themes and Subthemes of Being Different as the Ethnic Minority on the Team	
.....	124
Table 4: Themes and Subthemes of French-English Divisions on the National Team ..	133
Table 5: Themes and Subthemes of Religion is an Important but Personal Thing.....	140
Table 6: The Themes and Subthemes of Rising Up to a Superstar	154
Table 7: The Themes and Subthemes of One Canada, Two Teams.	164

List of Figures

Figure 1 The distribution of numbers of CSP articles published in the eight journals in total from 2008 to 2017 by year.....	33
Figure 2 The distribution of the amount of CSP articles published in the eight journals from 2008 to 2017 by journal	33
Figure 3 The intersecting social identities that are salient on the Canadian National Boxing Team and intersect.	99
Figure 4 MS's mandala drawing that include the elements of same-sex couple, feather, and the word SPONSORSHIP that represent herself on the National Team.....	102
Figure 5 MB's mandala drawing that include the elements of cross, flag, heart, people, words and symbols.....	103
Figure 6 AG's mandala drawing that the circle was divided with multiple identity words in each.....	104
Figure 7 CV's drawing of herself that is presented with French words in a boxing ring.	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 8 AF's drawing of herself that seven human figures with chatting clouds on a producing carpet.....	106
Figure 9 The expenses and reimbursement of athletes within different pool participating competitions at different levels (a) for non-Olympic weight categories and (b) for Olympic weight categories.	171

List of Appendices

Appendix A Participant Consent Form.....	243
Appendix B Ethics Approval Forms.....	246

Preface

I wish to thank Boxing Canada, and in particular Daniel Trepanier (High Performance Director), Roy Halpern (Executive Director), Pat Fiacco (President), and the athletes of the Canadian National Women's Boxing Team for their support and generosity. Without the grace of Boxing Canada, this project would not have been possible.

Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

As sport psychology professionals, we are meant to support athletes as they enhance their sport performance whilst validating their potential to accomplish their goals as a primary responsibility. Sport psychology professionals have applied various mental training techniques to help athletes develop mental skills, such as relaxation (Kudlackova, Eccles, & Dieffenbach, 2013; Pelka, Kölling, Ferrauti, Meyer, Pfeiffer, & Kellmann, 2016), visualization (Moran, 2014; Ridderinkhof & Brass, 2015), goal setting (Lock & Lathem, 2013; Lochbaum & Gottardy, 2015; Wack & Crosland, 2014), self-talk (Blanchfield, Hardy, De Morree, Staiano, & Marcora, 2014; Hatzigeorgiadis, Galanis, Zourbanos, & Theodorakis, 2014) and mindfulness (Gardner & Moore, 2012; Scott-Hamilton, Schutte, & Brown, 2016). These techniques could be used to give general competencies to athletes no matter who are they, where are they from, or what specific problem they encounter.

Yet, every elite athlete is underpinned by strong uniqueness (i.e. individuality) and lives in a personally complex world, where the aforementioned techniques alone are too basic and general to draw on the full breadth of the challenges they encounter in their sport careers. In the practice field, more and more researchers and practitioners are beginning to turn to holistic approaches to understand athletes and their problems (e.g. Friesen & Orlick, 2010; Stambulova, 2016; Schinke, Stambulova, Si, & Moore, 2017; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Bond (2002) noted that mental skills alone are inadequate tools to address an athlete's personal and even athletic concerns. Rather, exploring the multifaceted dimensions of each athlete's identity, addressing the whole person, acts as

the stepping-stone to improved athletic performance. Miller and Kerr (2002) stated, “Performance excellence is attained only through optimal personal development” (p. 141). Wylleman, Alfermann, and Lavallee (2004) suggested a holistic, life-span developmental perspective to understand athletes’ transitions in their athletic careers as well as in other domains of their lives, including the changes they encounter at a psychological level (from adolescence into young adulthood), a psychosocial level (development of temporary/stable relationships with a partner), and at the academic or vocational level (transiting into higher education or into a professional occupation). Henrikson, Stambulova and Roessler (2010) created a holistic ecological approach to investigate the environment in which athletes develop, analyzing family, peers, schools, cultures, organization, sport system, team history and other contextual factors that contribute to athletes’ successes in career transitions.

The holistic and cultural trends to understand athletes and sport psychology practice were spurred with the development of Culture Sport Psychology (CSP, see Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009), which is represented as a formalized trajectory of research and practice devoted to understand sport participants and sport phenomena through a cultural lens. Martens (1987) called for the resistance to separate academic pursuit from the applied work and instead adopt a more human-centered approach since the orthodox science removed the person from the process of knowing. The traditional sport psychology centralized white, male, middle-classed, and educated scholars’ and athletes’ values and ideologies over other clients and participants’ identities. This choice resulted in taking up the subjects as independent and autonomous beings and the Cartesian split (i.e. the mind-body split) (Butryn, 2010; McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Ryba & Schinke,

2009). Within CSP, athletes and researchers are regarded as cultural beings, where the ways in which cultural context and social practices permeate and constitute the individual psyche, shape their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (Hacker & Mann, 2017). To contest the white dominant ideologies found in sport psychology and to build up cultural inclusive understanding of athletes' experiences / stories, those undertaking CSP approaches have strived to emphasize the diversity of athletes' cultural identities and integrate marginalized topics in the form of cultural praxis, such as gender-biased and homophobic behaviours within the hyper-masculine structure of any sport (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003; Schinke & McGannon, 2014). Grounded in the earlier work that call into question the marginalization of culture and cultural identities in sport psychology (e.g., Butryn, 2002; Duda & Allison, 1990; Gill, 2001; Krane, 2001), CSP advocates have encouraged researchers and practitioners to help athletes centralize their own identity positions, and the implications of these identities to research, practice and physical activity participation (McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenebaum, 2010; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013).

In this chapter, I delineate the context and purpose of the current project. To begin with, I will give an overview of the athletes' identities in sport psychology, then I will move to the need to study female boxers, drawing insights on how female boxing developed and the identity inequalities in this sport. Moving beyond the Eurocentric discourses of traditional sport psychology, I am undertaking a social constructionist approach (Crotty, 1998) and intersectionality framework (e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2015) to explicate the complexity and multiplicity of these female athletes' identities.

This research is thus designed to contribute to the Cultural Sport Psychology (CSP) scholarship through offering further depth into the cultural diversity and complexity of athletes' identities.

1.1.1 The holistic view towards athletes' identities. The traditional sport psychology solely focused on the sport aspects of athletes, wherein the athletes are constructed as a particular group that is distinct from regular people. For example, Gould, Dieffenbach and Moffett (2002) interviewed 10 American Olympic champions and their significant others, and found that the elite athletes were characterized by: (a) the ability to cope with and control anxiety; (b) confidence; (c) mental toughness/resiliency; (d) sport intelligence; (e) the ability to focus and block out distractions; (f) competitiveness; (g) a hard-work ethic; (h) the ability to set and achieve goals; (i) "coachability"; (j) high levels of dispositional hope; (k) optimism; and (l) adaptive perfectionism. Douglas (2009) problematized these ideas relating to athlete identity as they have traditionally been constructed with an overly narrow focus on sport dedication, performance, and competition. He emphasized how the performance-based narratives around athletes' lives often jeopardizes their wellbeing and long-term development. When the performance narrative ceased to fit into athletes' changing lives, such as when they transitioned into retirement, athletes often experience identity wreckage and/or personal trauma (Carless & Douglas, 2012; 2013). Moreover, the unilateral focus on performance has perpetuated unequal power relations within sport. The common portrayal of the athlete identities is often connected to hegemonic masculine values which privilege white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, upper-middle-class identities, and which exclude or marginalize other forms of identity that do not conform to these values (Kontos, 2010).

For example, male athletes who do not conform to hegemonic ideals of masculinity – such as being aggressive, competitive, independent, and strong, in contrast to opposing ideals of “femininity” – are often positioned as feminine and even as being gay, and then they are exposed to blatantly hostile attitudes and harassment in sport (Krane & Kaus, 2014). Furthermore, in traditional research, the cultural and sport subcultural context have always been eliminated to understand athletes as who they are. In the social constructionist view, people are shaped by a series of complimentary and contradictory dominant cultural values simultaneously through socialization (Ryba & Wright, 2010), thus, athletes’ identities and the way they are enacted/performed are multifaceted, ever-changing, and continually being re-negotiated in different times and contexts (McGannon & Smith, 2015; Schinke & McGannon, 2015). For example, Krane et al. (2004) illustrated how sportswomen live in a paradox of fitting into social expectations surrounding femininity and competing ideals of athleticism, and how this can relate to unhealthy behaviours such as disordered eating (Krane, et al., 2010).

Based on these critiques, researchers and practitioners were called to attend to the diversity and distinctive challenges related to athletes’ identities in sport, which constitutes athletes as who they are and their support needs (Fisher & Roper, 2015; Kamphoff, Gill, Araki & Hammond, 2010). Ronkainen, Kavoura, and Ryba (2016) conducted an overview of various athlete identity studies in sport psychology. They found the contemporary dominant perspectives of athlete identity rooted in qualitative and constructionist researches, conceptualizing that identities are relationally constructed and that they shift in multiple cultural discourses and narratives, wherein the topics of gender, motherhood, sport subculture, national culture, and media representations would

all contribute to athletes' identities. For example, McGannon, McMahon, and Gonsalves (2018) explored motherhood as a socially and culturally constructed identity that linked to sport training and competition. They found that women keep negotiating their identities between culturally constructed motherhood and sport. Aside from these, some marginalized identities were increasingly explored, such as a group of researchers who identified the importance of integrating racial/ethnic backgrounds to understand athletes and their sport experience (e.g. Butryn, 2002; Duda & Allison, 1990; Kontos & Breland-Noble, 2002; Martens, Mobley & Zizzi, 2000; Ram, Starek & Johnson, 2004). Another most concerned identity of athletes was that of students. Due to the current sport system in North America, university student-athletes composed the majority of participants in sport psychology research. These athletes engage in the dual career and integrate the two identities, wherein the priorities of academic studies or sport, time management, dual career discourses impacted athletes' motivation and choices for future plans (e.g., Ryba, Stambulova, Selänne, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2017). Other than the student identity, Araki, Kodani, Gupta, and Gill (2013) examined the sport experience of different religious Asian adolescent girls, where they found the unique experience and different perceptions of sport attires existed among different religious groups. All of these identities intersecting with further identities to shape who athletes "are" in their sport contexts (Schinke & McGannon, 2015). Through acknowledging the multiple aspects of athletes, coaches, and other sport participants, scientists and the public can gain a deeper understanding of how to support the diversity of athletes and reduce forms of identity oppression and marginalization, generating contextual level implementations to promote social justice and cultural inclusiveness through sport, contributing to healthier

experiences (Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Schinke, Stambulova, Lidor, Papaioannou, & Ryba, 2016).

Despite of the increasing number of researchers demonstrated the importance of various aspects of athletes to their sport performance, a few documentations also focus on how these identities interact with each other among different sport situations. Krane and her colleague (2004) explored the intersection of gender, sexuality, and physicality through interviewing female athletes about their body images and perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Butryn (2002) investigated the intersecting identities of race, gender, and physicality in sport sub-culture. As athletes occupy multiple identities at the same time, only focusing on one or two aspects of athletes' identities would impede and mislead researchers and practitioners catching the full understanding of athletes' experiences. Schinke and McGannon (2015) developed a special section of *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* in order to delve into the conception of "intersectionality." They problematized the often fractured and over-simplified tradition to encapsulate an individual's cultural identities, and argued the subjectivities of athletes, practitioners and researchers are fluid, multiple and ever changing. They officially proposed the conception of "intersectionality" and called for researchers attend to the multiple cultural discourses – as researchers in sport psychology have for many years now (see McGannon & Smith, 2015) - pertaining to the diverse social identities (e.g., race, sexuality, gender, physicality, nationality) and athletes' memberships in local, social and cultural groups. In order to utilize the generated knowledge in fieldwork, researchers also suggested following the cultural praxis approach (Blodgett et al., 2014; Ryba & Wright, 2010) to generate more meaningful implications for sport institutions and athletes from the

localized research findings. Thus, through interrogating the multiple identities of athletes, we aim to create a more inclusive sport and exercise psychology, and to transform sociocultural issues within the everyday lives of participants.

1.1.2 Expanding research on female boxers. Boxing is an individual combat sport, through which one can establish independence, individuality, fame, fortune, and most importantly a clear triumph over another individual with nothing but one's own hands. Many artists thought it implies the philosophical and social condition of man and, sometimes, women in modern mass society (Ross, 2011). In the literary or artistic accounts, boxing tends to be portrayed as “bundled racialization, acquisitive masculinity, consumer culture, and working-class suffering into a tight association” (Bain, 2013, p.36). For instance, the famous prize movie *Million Dollars Baby* subscribed the hardship a female boxer experienced in terms of gender, race and class inequality in a boxing club. The cultural stereotypes and representations of boxing transmit values toward people who participate in it, and shape their identities through language and daily embodied practices (Channon & Jennings, 2014).

Boxing can be divided into amateur boxing and professional boxing, both of which involves attack and defense with the fists. Amateur boxing is displayed at the highest levels in the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, and World Championships. Women's bouts consist of a total of four rounds of two minutes. Boxers in a ring are matched in weight and abilities. A boxer wins a match by either outscoring the opponent or by rendering the opponent incapable of continuing the fight. Amateur female boxers are required to wear protective headgear, reducing the number of injuries, knockdowns, and knockouts. Boxing remains a violent sport, which dramatically displays

the working-class male aggressiveness, courage, and physicality (Hargreaves, 1997; Kim, 2012). While male professional boxing became popular entertainment in the 1920s, female professional boxing had a long hiatus until the 1980s (Kim, 2012). In 1991, Canada became the first country in North America and one of the first in the world to sanction amateur boxing for women. London 2012 marked a progression in boxing when it was the first Olympics in which women were allowed to compete. However, the inclusion evoked controversial perspectives. On one hand, the physical, violent, self-contained and muscular body image of female boxers challenge narrowly defined and strictly binary understandings of gender circulated within the Western socio-cultural context (Hargreaves, 1997; Lindner, 2012). On the other, women's unavoidable feminine traits displayed in the ring reinforce the understandings of the female body as "naturally" weak, vulnerable and in need of protection (Lindner, 2012; Mennesson, 2000). The British boxing champion Amir Khan was amongst the most prominent opponents of women's participation in boxing in general: "Deep down, I think women shouldn't fight. That's my opinion... When you get hit it's very painful. Women can get knocked out" (BBC, 2009). It has, however, been reported that male boxers were significantly more likely than female boxers to receive injuries and male boxers have a higher risk of knockouts than female boxers (Bledsoe, Li & Levy, 2005). Massimiliano et al. (2011) reviewed a medical report of female boxing in Italy during 2002-2007 and found that female boxing has a very low incidence of events requiring hospitalization. Moreover, no specific diseases in female boxers could be observed, in particular regarding the breast and reproductive system. Hence, the reason why the successful female boxer contradicts herself could be largely explained from social-cultural aspects. McCree (2011) examined

the media narratives surrounding the death of a young female boxer and found female boxing in general still suffers from a lack of legitimacy, where sexism and male domination consistently underpinned the female boxers' multiple images and contradictions as a role model. Halbert (1997) found female boxers face discrimination at gyms and in competitions due to their participation in a deviant sport. To manage their lives against the judgement, the women use various strategies to arrange their identity so that they appear neither too masculine nor too feminine (see also Channon & Phipps, 2017).

The presence of women in boxing manifests female muscularity, physical strength, and aggression (Hargreaves, 1997). As number of women participating in sport increases, there is a promotion of athletic and muscular image of femininity, which tries to replace the hegemonic femininity and become privileged (Hargreaves, 1997). The embodied experiences of female athletes, if not only in boxing, have been a focus of a bunch of sociological researchers. Krane and her colleagues (2014) conveyed that though female athletes feel they are marginalized and perceived as different from "normal" women in society, they proud of their strong, developed body and feel empowerment that generalize beyond the sport context. Channon and Jennings (2014) noted that women's embodiment could be profoundly changed by martial arts, which empowers cultivation of physical and mental agency. Through practicing self-defence, women reject notions of innate female weakness and vulnerability while remaking and empowering a sense of femininity. van Ingen (2011) developed a project that used to help female and transgender survivors of violence overcome the life trauma and restructure their identities

through recreational boxing. She found expressing anger in sport can be used to impel change in the lives of survivors.

Sports contexts are often understood as “microcosms” of larger socio-cultural structures, but they also have the power to impact, or even change the social constructions. Female boxers are not a homogenous group of being who share the exact same experience. How do women, who vary in race and ethnicity, class, sexuality, and age position themselves differently in the power structure, and construct fluid and contradictory experiences of boxing? How does boxing guise a diverse shaping of female boxers with different lives and promote social justice? These are the questions that need to be touched on.

1.1.3 Situating the project. The Canadian Women’s National Boxing Team athletes were identified as suitable for the project. In the Canadian Boxing Team, the backgrounds of these athletes are complex. They come from various socio-economic statuses with a range of educational levels, races and ethnicities: some are from inner cities, some are new Canadians, some have criminal records, some are from single parent households, and some come out as LGBT (Schinke, 2007). Canada men’s amateur boxing was once among the most successful in the world with eight Olympic medals won during the golden years from 1984 to 1996, seven of these in three Olympics. Then performance results of Canadian boxers waned due to institutional reforms and increased quality of global boxing standards (Schinke, Stambulova, Trepanier & Oghene, 2015). In order to regain the golden years of this National Team, Sport Canada and the Canadian Olympic Committee began to contribute funding through the “Own the Podium”(OTP) program, which began to support Canadian National Teams including the boxing teams

three years in advance of the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. For the identified medal potential athletes, the OTP program provided ample financial and sport expert services. Compared with the Canadian National Men's Boxing Team, the Canadian Women's Boxing Team ranks higher within the boxing world (www.aiba.com). Since 2001, the female team program has developed several world champions, including Crystal Sampson (2001), Mary Spencer (2005, 2008, 2010), and Ariane Fortin (2008). Furthermore, this particular program has further developed since--- world championship medalists, and many more Pan-American Games Champions, including the reigning Pan-American Games Champions, Mandy Bujold (2011, 2015) and Caroline Veyre (2015).

My research project was part of a larger project called *Intersecting Identities of National Team Boxers*, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) in 2014, which focuses on female National Team boxers' social identities and sport stories. The project was supported by Boxing Canada, who remains committed to the ongoing development of more inclusive athlete services, confirming the participation and holistic development of its boxers. Within this project, there were 10 female boxers coming from different backgrounds and who were in various weight categories to represent Canada fighting at the international level. They ranged from 20 to 31 years of age; four of them were openly lesbians, one of them identified herself as aboriginal, three of them were first or second- generation immigrants, and for six of them, their first language was French. In this diverse context, the female boxers experienced various forms of marginalization in their career life due to their social identities. These elite boxers became high-level performers and brought rich stories of working in the sport system.

1.1.4 Theoretical contributions. The intersectionality approach is used to elucidate that human lives are more complex, fluid, and multi-dimensional than often presented in psychology research (Easteal, 2003). To respond to the call of CSP (Schinke & McGannon, 2015), this project expands upon developing work, investigating empirical intersectionality studies to explore athletes' intersecting social identities and their meanings in a certain sport context of sport psychology (e.g. Carless & Douglas, 2013; Douglas, 2014; McGannon, Curtin, Schinke, & Schweinbenz, 2012). Grounded in the social constructionism, the current project adopted the understanding of self and identity as the process and product of multiple cultural discourses and interpersonal interactions (McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ronkainen, Kavoura, & Ryba, 2016; Schinke & McGannon, 2015; Smith & Sparks, 2008). Within the current research, the researcher endeavours to illustrate how people perform and enact their identities through the stories they tell and feel a part of; and how these stories are intertwined with other people and are constituted by broader sociocultural narratives/discourses that are embedded in the landscapes they inhabit, thus shaping particular ways of seeing and being in the world (Douglas & Carless, 2009; McGannon & Spence, 2010; Smith, 2010). The contextual understandings of identities and power relations are placed into the centre of the current project. In order to destabilize the taken-for-granted meanings of athletic identity as a singular sport role, the intersectionality approach enriches understandings of athletes who may not conform to dominant norms (Douglas, 2014; Ronkainen et al., 2016).

As an interdisciplinary project, both the intersectionality study and sport psychology study could be extended. Due to the complexity and broad intention of intersectionality, there has been ambiguity and inconsistency in how it has been

conceptualized and applied in scholarship (e.g., Choo & Ferree, 2010; Collins, 2015; Hulko, 2009; Jordan-Zachery, 2007; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008). The theoretical underpinnings of intersectionality studies encompass a range of perspectives that vary in ontological and epistemological assumptions (Mehrotra, 2010). Furthermore, Hulko (2009) found that the vast majority of studies focused on race, class, and gender but few included other identities, such as ability, age, religion, sexual orientation, and nationality. In the sociological studies, researchers strive to justify how the power asymmetry marginalizes certain group of people in political activities, while decrease the visibility of individual's agency when they engaging in social activities (e.g. Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Walker & Melton, 2015; Withycombe, 2011; Ratna, 2013). In the sociological studies, scholars essentially conceptualize gender, race, and class as social categories that top social meanings and power to the diverse identity-based groups of people. On the contrary, in psychology, researchers more focus on how individual socialize and react to the meanings of the social constructed identities (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 2004), while less attend to the potential inequality issues of various social ideologies. In the current study, I take the social constructionist approach to explore the fluid, complex, and context-contingent meanings of social identities through languages and cultural discourses. The concern of this research is formulated as how individual are shaped and reshape the society, including the issues of athletes' multiple identities, interlocking oppressions of social structure, and multiplicity of the social, historical, and cultural discourses in and through elite sport for a certain group of people - Canadian Women's National Team Boxers, within their respective training contexts.

The current research also amplified context-driven CSP forms of research (Schinke & Stambulova, 2017) through integrating the marginalized identities, and generating local and institutional meanings of the diverse identities within the specific sport context. Building on these early writings, there has been a further push for sport psychology research to be taken up in more culturally inclusive and socially just ways, expanding beyond traditional (ethnocentric) approaches and universities to consider identities and topics that critical to local context (McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009; Schinke & McGannon, 2014, 2015). In this research, the athletes were encouraged to share the multiple aspects of themselves and the moments of being included and excluded in the general boxing context as well as on the National Team, through which, the relevant identities and their implication to sport performance were emerging in athletes' life stories. The sociocultural and institutional environment should not only be seen as the background factors of athletes' mental struggles, but as coexistence, which helps shape athletes' sport experiences. Through analyzing the meanings and power relations of intersecting social identities that situated in certain contexts, the voices and stories of marginalized groups and identities were centralized, and the marginalized participants were empowered by being seen as a whole person. As a cultural praxis project, this research was carried forward based on the practices needs. Blodgett (2015) primarily set up a praxis agenda to facilitate aboriginal relocated athletes sport involvement in Euro-Canadian contexts and to contribute to local community youth sport participation. In order to move this form of inquiry forward, praxis was embraced as a guiding tenet in the current project. Through its focalization, the research was aimed at

developing knowledge more aligned with helping the Canadian National Boxing Team context as it began to move toward a centralized program where the program's staff could consider the sport inequalities of female boxers, opening up meaningful opportunities for improving their situations.

In summary, following the rationale of cultural sport psychology (CSP), I strive to provide holistic understandings of athletes and how the diversity of athletes inform physical activity participation and sport performance, while providing potential solutions for sport equality (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; McGannon & Schinke, 2014), beginning with the sport of elite women's boxing. In contrast with the sociological researches that restrict their focus on the traditional triangle of gender, race, and class, in the current project, athletes narrate diverse identities that are meaningful to their sociocultural lives. Moreover, instead of only focusing on their identity oppressions and social justice, the intersecting forms in terms of how these identities reciprocally construct each other, and their implications to sport are also highlighted. Through such efforts, I provide another empirical support to intersectionality theories, and also, diversify ways to conceptualize intersectionality, which could help people outside feminist studies and sociology to understand and accept the intersectionality theories and apply it in their own areas.

1.1.5 Practical implications. Cultural praxis is the core of CSP (Blodgett, et al., 2014). Following the CSP agenda, this research was also blended with theories and social actions (McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba & Wright, 2010). This research contributed to the practical field from empowering the individual athlete to accelerating social transformations through sport. Three specific implications were 1) impelling practitioners

to view athletes holistically; 2) advancing an inclusive sport environment; and 3) promoting social justice through sport. This research opened up a new angle to direct the sport psychological practices by de-essentializing athletes' identities and situating them in a particular context. Instead of providing mental skills and focusing on enhancing their sport performances, this project facilitated practitioners to extend their focus on multiple aspects of athletes, and their lives in and out of the sport, helping the athletes negotiate multifaceted sense of themselves. Through helping athletes achieve a unified and complete self that adjust to the environment, sport practitioners could facilitate athletes' personal development, and further advance their sport development (Miller & Kerr, 2002).

On the other hand, this project provided researchers and practitioners, with a better understanding of what draws and retains sport participants in a culturally diverse elite sport context, to consider the specificity of female athletes, where and how identities are embraced in some instances and silenced in others, and the implications for athletes and their teams. Through critically examining the power imbalances within the sport context, the dominant cultural ideologies that privilege certain social groups while subordinating others were revealed. In building up a just sport environment for diverse athletes to pursue excellence, these findings could increase the awareness of sport psychology practitioners, coaches, and administrators about their non-inclusive but taken-for-granted practices in their daily practices. Through revealing the various voices of athletes within the same sport institution, cultural diversity is promoted while transforming policies formed to make organizational changes.

In terms of the spirit of praxis, the current project will be set to move beyond academic outcomes and contribute to the larger social and sport community. This agenda generated locally resonant knowledge that supports actionable outcomes for the National Team development. From the Canadian top-level boxers' sharing, they are expected to provide a meaningful, instructive knowledge about how to engage in the Canadian sport systems, focused on one sport discipline, with the emphasis on gender. What is gained through this scholarship could extend to other sport participants and contexts, leading to more inclusive practices for a wider number of participants given the diversities in Canadian sport. Moving forward, Sport Canada would be able to take hold of this knowledge and implement it into concrete changes that would be meaningful at the institutional level. Through acknowledging the material and cultural constraints for marginalized athletes to perform excellence, the improvements could be made to build up an inclusive environment and increase athletes' sport experiences. These outcomes aligned with the goal of Own the Podium program (see Schinke, Stambulova, Trepanier & Oghene, 2015) through offering the psychological support for athletes on the National Team and clear the additional references for distributing the funding.

1.1.6 Research questions. Drawing on in-depth accounts shared by the national female boxers, this research will address the following questions:

1. How do the national female boxers construct multiple social identities in boxing?
2. What specific social identities are privileged within the Canadian National Boxing Team and what are subordinated?

3. What are the implications of the various culturally constructed social identities and associated meanings for female boxers' sport experience and wellbeing?

1.1.7 Definitions.

Culture. Moving beyond the notion of culture being a singular and static category or entity, I applied the construction of culture as a part of shifting discourses and exchanges that produce situated meaning (Ryba, 2009; Ryba & Schinke, 2009). To elaborate the definition, culture is “the messy process of negotiated meaning in context” (Singer, 1994, p. 338) rather than the tidy and objectively identifiable category it is often assumed to be in traditional sport psychology research. People are understood as having multiple, intersecting cultural identities within various discourses of class, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physicality, etc., with each of these identities shifting in meaning and expression within various contexts and interactions (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012).

Cultural praxis. An active and reflexive process that links theory, culture, and social action in a dialectical reciprocity (Ryba, 2009). Praxis oriented research, such as CSP, is thus aimed at challenging social inequalities through knowledge production processes that are carried out with research participants rather than for or on them (Lather, 1987; Singer, 1994). Such research opens up space for culturally marginalized participants to share accounts of the sociocultural structures and social injustices that constrain their life, and contribute to knowledge production that is more critically connected to their interests and needs (Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013).

Identity. Identity is a person's conception and expression of self. From the social constructionist perspective, identity is developed as a consequence of the interaction between individual psychological and sociocultural processes (Koole & Parchoma, 2012). *Social identity* is defined as the self-concepts of being a member in social groups (Turner & Oakes, 1986). From a poststructuralist viewpoint (see McGannon & Johnson, 2009), identity is fluid, multiple and ever changing because who we "are" is the product of multiple discourses (e.g., race, sexuality, gender, physicality, nationality) and our membership in local, social and cultural groups. These "intersecting" identities then, when limited through the circulation of certain cultural discourses that privilege a select few and subordinate others, serve to create systems of interlocking oppression, whereby various aspects compound to further marginalize people (Collins, 2000).

Oppression. Oppression is the mistreatment and exploitation of people within a social identity group, which operates on three levels as personal, cultural, and institutional at all time (Katz, 1978). Social oppression is based on power dynamics, and an individual's social location in society. An individual's social location determines how others will perceive one in the whole of society. Oppression is derived from three types of power: the power to design or manipulate the rules, to win the game through force or competition, and the ability to write history. The political theorist, Lynn Weber (1998) argued that oppression persists because most individuals fail to recognize it; that is, discrimination is often not visible to those who are not in the midst of it. These inequalities further perpetuate themselves because those oppressed rarely have access to resources that would allow them to escape their maltreatment. This can lead to internalized oppression, in which subordinate groups essentially give up the fight to

access equality and simply accept their fate as a non-dominant group (Freibach-Heifetz & Stopler, 2008).

Power. Based on Foucauldian theorizing, power is conceptualized as a relational concept that works through the actions of people, rather than a possession that can be held or readily located (Pringle, 2005). Produced from within systems of social relations, power circulates through various discourses to shape and constrain perceptions of reality, including understandings of the self and others (McGannon & Busanich, 2010; Pringle, 2005). From this sense, power can be repressive for people who do not have equal access in their ability to exercise it, because the control power provides allows for some forms of knowledge to be produced and accepted around their lives over other forms (McGannon & Busanich, 2010). In the present research context, power is manifested in the relations among various identities. In addition, power is not statically located in people or places, but is shifting fluidly through everyday social interactions (Pringle, 2005). Power must be renegotiated and reconfigured as sport activities unfold, ongoing.

Race. Race was regarded a quasi-biological social construct that identifies different types of human bodies based on phenotypic traits such as skin color, eye shape, or hair texture (Butryn, 2002; Duda & Allison, 1990; Ram et al., 2004). Race s nothing more than a historically and politically constructed concept, created in the segregation logics and situated in the recursive relationship between social structures and cultural representations (Collins, 2015). For example, Euro-Canadian community members have white racial identities, which confer on them the power and privileges of whiteness, whereas the non-white identities of the other community members create a context of marginalization. Namely, *Ethno-centric/Whiteness*, which represents a whole set of

ideologies, discourses, and identities, serves to produce and perpetuate existing racial hierarchies and white domination (Hartmann, 2007).

Ethnicity. A set of social and psychological phenomena associated with a culturally constructed group identity that is in opposition to others based on perceived cultural differentiation and/or common descent (Jones, 2002). The concept of ethnicity focuses on the ways in which social and cultural processes intersect with one another in the identification of, and interaction between, ethnic groups. In the current research, race and ethnicity are usually combined as a single identity construct due to the recognition of the lack of consensus in defining and differentiating one from the other, and the difficulty of relying on either construct exclusively (Adair & Rowe, 2010). The intent was to increase their exploratory value as intertwined, socially constructed and evolving concepts.

Gender. Gender is the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity and femininity. Depending on the context, these characteristics include biological sex (i.e. the state of being male, female or intersex), sex-based social structures (including gender roles and other social roles), or gender identity (Udry, 1994; World Health Organization, 2015). Due to the binary gender system in sport, I only focused on the female aspects. I investigated how the assigned “female” boxers constructed their gender identity in the masculine sport environment.

Masculinity. Masculinity is a set of characteristics and practices placed in gender relations of domination. Traits traditionally cited as masculine include physical strength, the ability to use interpersonal violence in the face of conflict, and authority (Schippers, 2007). Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice,

which embodies the legitimacy of patriarchy, assuring the dominant position of men (i.e., tied to white, middle-class, and heterosexual status), the subordination of women, and other forms of masculinities (Hearn, 2004). Currently, boxing is constructed as a masculine sport, where the masculine values are endorsing in the environment.

Queer. Queer is an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities (Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, LGBT) who are not heterosexual and/or not conform to the traditional gender ideologies that match their sex. Not all LGBT people identify as queer. Queering is a cultural and social process of change of a dominant behavioural practice in a context in terms of how to act sexually, how to behave as women or as men (Eng, 2008; Krane, Waldron, Kauer, & Semerjian, 2010). Queer itself indicates the intersecting meanings of gender and sexuality. Some lesbian athletes identify themselves as queer and question the binary gender system in sport.

Religion/ Spirituality. Religion/Spirituality is a belief “in a relation to a Supreme Being” that is sincere and meaningful, occupying a place in the life of its possessor (United States Supreme Court, 1965). Gunn (2003) deconstructed religion as a belief that people hold regarding such matters as God, truth, or doctrines of faith. It is an identity that people affiliate to certain religious groups, and as a way of life or practices which include actions, rituals, customs, and traditions that distinguish the believer from adherents of other religions. Currently, religion is implied with all the three-layered meanings according to athletes’ individual understandings and situations.

Sexuality. Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes (American Psychological Association, 2015). Sexuality is a sense of personal identity as well, which ties to the

intimate relationship closely and not necessarily associated with the characteristics of masculinity and femininity. However, it still naturally intersects with sex and gender because people's interactions in a social space are gendered (Eng, 2008). Studies of sexuality in recent queer theory and sport have often adopted a more fluid, hybrid and contextual notion of sexuality (Sykes, 2006). Displays of hetero- and homosexual identifications are regarded as socially constructed preferences instead of expressions of essentialist identities (Elling & Janssens, 2009).

Physicality. Physicality is the representation of a person's physical capacity. This trait is essential to sport feminists' theorizations concerning issues of the female body and physical activity, which is used to describe a woman's bodily experience in sport (McDermott, 1996). In current research, physicality refers to the body size, body shape and body image of female boxers, which is closely associated with the perceived masculine and feminine appearance of their body.

Socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's position in social stratification. This position is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation (American Psychological Association, 2015). Societies are usually divided into lower class, middle class and upper class. From social functionalism perspectives, sport produces organic solidarity across group boundaries in post-traditional society (Bromberger, 1995), or it contributes to the alienation of the working class and the disguise of the oppressive forces of class relations in capitalism. In current research, the socioeconomic status indicates the financial status and lifestyles of boxers or their families.

Chapter Two

This chapter includes the theoretical background of the research and the literature relevant to the current topic. Firstly, I presented an overview of the theoretical background-cultural sport psychology (CSP), including an introduction of the cultural turn in sport psychology and the emergency of CSP. The tenets of CSP were utilized in current literature, including postmodernism, marginalization and power relationships, and cultural praxis. Secondly, psychological and sociological theories of identity were introduced as identity became regarded as a core conception connecting sociocultural context to people's values, thinking and behaviours. Thirdly, intersectionality studies in feminism and sport were reviewed with the implication that this project is an interdisciplinary CSP project. Finally, a summary of contentious issues is followed up with an overview of the research questions that have framed the current study.

2.1 Cultural Sport Psychology

2.1.1 The cultural turn in sport psychology. As one of the largest industries in the world, sport provides a global market for athletes and sport professionals to exchange their talents and knowledge. According to Horowitz and McDaniel (2015), the labor migration of high-skilled athletes (i.e., athletes living outside of their country of birth pursuing sport career) contributes to the host country's medal-winning in Olympics, and higher than the general migration population in its productivity and efficiency. Schinke and his colleagues (2011) found that, since 1992, 12%-18% of immigrant athletes represent Canada in the Olympic Games. In addition to the increasing number of migrant athletes in national and professional sport teams, international student-athletes (i.e., athletes relocate to pursue academic degrees while participating in intercollegiate sport)

are becoming prevalent in university settings. Besides economic prosperity (see Horowitz & McDaniel, 2015), migrant athletes have brought cultural diversity as well as multicultural challenges for sport psychology researchers and practitioners (Martens, Mobley, Zizzi, 2000; Schinke, McGannon, Parham & Lane, 2012). The *International Society of Sport Psychology* (ISSP) published a position stand to call for researchers and practitioners to become aware of the sociocultural aspects of sport and sport participants, so that we might develop culturally competent research and practices. This term, cultural competence, refers to the ability of reflecting and recognizing participants, clients and self as cultural beings who perceive and understand the world in different ways, with the focus not only on athletes' performances and developments, but also on their safety and wellbeing (Ryba, Stambulova, Si & Schinke, 2013).

At this point, a culture aspect of sport phenomena has been attended. Tracing back in our field's history, Duda and Allison (1990) were among the first who proposed including race and ethnicity as meaningful conceptions in sport psychology. They collected 186 articles from the *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* from 1979 to 1987 and found only one (.5%) article that included race and ethnicity as categorical variables, and six studies (3.2%) described the ethnic/racial characteristics of the sample, which was attributed to the majority population of sample being Caucasian (95%). Ram, Starek and Johnson (2004) further analyzed the content of 982 manuscripts published in JSEP, JASP, and TSP between 1987 and 2000. They found 19.86% of the manuscripts included references to race/ethnicity and 1.22% included references to sexual orientation. Kamphoff and her colleagues (2010) analyzed 5214 AASP conference program abstracts from 1986 to 2007, and found only 10.5% of all abstracts included discussion of a

cultural diversity issue while 31.9% included a diverse sample. Of those abstracts that addressed cultural diversity, the majority addressed gender, with almost no attention to race and ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, social class, disability, or older adults. This void called for researchers and practitioners to re-examine their past work reflectively and consider more comprehensive and ethical approaches in order to build up theories and engage in cultural competent sport psychology services.

The cultural void in sport psychology has been criticized from three points since the late twentieth century. First, participants' cultural backgrounds, such as race and ethnicity, were rarely examined as independent variables in sport psychology literature (Ram, Starek & Johnson, 2004). Second, culture-specific aspects for those outside of White Eurocentric society have also been overlooked (e.g., Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003; Kontos & Breland-Noble, 2002; Ryba & Wright, 2005). Third, there is little understanding among sport psychologists regarding how to work with clients of cultures different from their own (Duda & Allison, 1990). Gill (2004) stated, "we can only make important contributions to the real world of developing sport and exercise participants when we incorporate gender and cultural analyses" (p. 497). In her view, cultural factors, such as race and ethnicity are not merely independent variables defining group membership and structural position, but instead are more fundamental and related to basic psychological processes of perception, cognition, intellectual functioning, value acquisition, personality development and expression, and social interaction. For example, Gano-Overway and Duda (1999) found African American athletes and European American athletes share the similar goal of winning and individualistic characteristics. African American athletes, however, attend more to personal expression (i.e., showing

one's own style and being innovative in outward appearance compared with others) and cooperation than European American athletes. Thus, personal expression is more strongly associated with task orientation factors for African Americans, and ego orientation factors for European Americans. This finding suggests coaches should not attempt to diminish the value placed on personal expressive goals by African American athletes. Accordingly, the cultural factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status need to be attended when designing, conducting, discussing, and applying research.

Nowadays, researchers have become more specific and critical by incorporating cultural factors in their studies. An increasing number of articles (4.8%) in *The Sport Psychologist*, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, and *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* from 2001 to 2006 were found using cultural background as a main component of their theoretical framework, which compared to the figure of 1.5% from 1987 to 2000, showing a 320% increase over six years (Peters & Williams, 2009), and this was 10 years ago. Two research paradigms were identified among the culture-involved research of sport psychology: cross-cultural studies and cultural studies. Cross-cultural studies operate within a positivist epistemological paradigm, employing modernist theories to derive and test research hypotheses. Researchers compare the psychological process or outcomes between different cultures and reveal the limit of generalization of psychological theories (Ryba et al., 2013). Cross-cultural studies revealed differences between cultures, but were also left with questions of why the cultural differences existed, and do the differences exist consistently. Cultural studies were launched in response to the dissatisfaction with the ontological universalism and decontextualized methodology of cross-cultural studies. Undertaking the social

constructionism epistemology, cultural studies approaches concerned with how culture underpins the psychological processes and how culture and humans mutually shaped each other embedded into socio-historical contexts (Miller, 2002).

Cultural psychologists focused on the interpretive analysis of culture in search of meaning (Geertz, 1973), where theories were treated as a fluid heuristic of interpretation rather than a fixed model, and focused on marginalized populations and their issues. Schinke et al. (2009) found most of the mainstream sport psychology theories; research methodologies and intervention techniques originated from North America and Europe, where individuals are the focal point and the world is extending outward from the individual to community and society. There is a strong emphasis on theories of self, including self-efficacy, self-concept, self-esteem, and self-determination. Then the mental training skills, such as goal setting, attribution retraining, competition plans, and post-performance debriefs, reflected self-promoting qualities. However, athletes' motivations and sport experiences from other cultural backgrounds might be marginalized and overlooked. Stepping out of a Eurocentric paradigm (see Ryba & Wright, 2005), cultural studies researchers claim that one must learn about the others' world while also understanding one's own position as culturally saturated (Ryba, 2009; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012). If the goal is to work effectively with athletes, researchers and practitioners need to understand who the athletes are and where they come from, implementing beyond the one-size-for-all treatment.

2.1.2 The emergence of CSP. To respond to the cultural void, in the first two decades of the new century, there were a series of researchers and practitioners establishing a new area called Cultural Sport Psychology (CSP), who chose to re-

examine sport phenomena through a sociocultural lens. CSP was formally proposed about 14 years ago through an instalment published in *Athletic Insight* with the initial curiosity of “Is it possible that the diversity in locations and people affect applied sport psychological techniques, delivery of service, and methods of inquiry?” (Schinke, Michel, Danielson, Gauthier, & Pickard, 2005). Following the discussions of conducting reflexive research and practice at the level of societies and communities (Ryba & Wright, 2005), CSP was defined to reflect unique aspirations and needs stemming from race, ethnicity, gender, and geography, among further considerations.

Schinke and Hanrahan (2009) edited the textbook *Cultural Sport Psychology*, wherein they systematically framed the outline of the new area in sport psychology. The following landmark books of *The Cultural Turn in Sport Psychology* (Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010), *The Psychology of Sub-Culture in Sport and Physical Activity* (Schinke & McGannon, 2014) and the *Routledge International Handbook of Sport Psychology* (Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2016) further promoted the development of CSP. The rationale of CSP is located in cultural diversity and research ethics, including decolonizing methodologies (Autumn 2009 in *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*), raising cultural awareness and competence in clinical counselling and applied sport psychology (December 2011 in *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*), focusing on marginalized sport issues and participants to promote social justice (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon & Fisher, 2014). Incorporating the insights from cultural psychology studies, CSP challenges the domain’s taken for granted, assumptions and practices, which are built on a White positivistic epistemology (see Butryn, 2010), and makes sport and exercise psychology professionals rethink research and practice through a culturally

reflexive lens (Ryba et al., 2010; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009; Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon & Fisher, 2014).

Within the CSP, there are two perspectives of culture: one is the etic view, from which culture is an external entity or independent variables that influence psychological functioning of individuals, and usually indicates a geographic location and its belongings; another is the emic view, from which culture is taken as an underpin of psychological process, manifesting as language, communication, and cultural practices, including meanings, beliefs, and values in a social-historical context (Ryba et al., 2013). Both views converge on the importance of culture on human mental and behavioral consequences. The etic perspectives suggested the foundational role of culture to explain the variability of psychological processes and human behaviours, while the emic view is more critical in examining the dynamics and interdependence between people and culture. In the emic view, culture resides and shifts within the discourses of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and age, among further considerations, with these layers constituting to cultural diversity (see McGannon & Smith, 2015; Mio, Barker-Hackett, & Tumambing, 2006).

As an emerging area, CSP has been increasingly attended and accepted by researchers and practitioners. I searched the articles published online using the phrase “cultural sport psychology” on Google Scholar from 2008 to 2018. To date, there are 107 articles found in the mainstream journals of sport psychology (i.e. *AI- Athletic Insight*; *PSE-Psychology of Sport and Exercise*; *IJSEP- International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*; *TSP- The Sport Psychologist*; *JASP- Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*; *JSPA- Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*; *IRSEP-International Review*

of Sport and Exercise Psychology). Six of these studies adopted the etic perspective and cross-culture paradigm that framed culture at the categorical level, utilizing quantitative methods to investigate the inter-cultural differences, while the rest took the emic cultural perspective, viewing culture at a conceptual level as some context shapes an individuals' experience and behaviours. From 2008 to 2014, the number of published CSP studies was sustained at five to eleven every year. In the past three years, there were more than 20 manuscripts published each year in the above peer-review journals (see Figure 1). PSE and IJSEP are at the front of promoting CSP studies with 33, and 38 papers of CSP published respectively in the past 10 years (see Figure 2). Among them, besides of the conceptual and methodological inquires, the empirical work of CSP is mainly focused on a) the reflections of athletes' development and sport psychology work in certain sport institutional and cultural contexts, such as working with Chinese athletes (e.g. Ge, Schinke, Dong, Lu, & Odgene, 2016; Si, Duan, Li, Zhang, & Su, 2015); b) culturally informed marginalized issues and identities, such as the acculturation experience of immigrant or transnational athletes (Meisterjahn, & Wrisberg, 2013; Schinke, Blodgett, McGannon, Ge, 2016), the sexual abuse of gay athletes (Van Raalte, et al., 2011), and the struggles of student-athletes (Ryba, Stambulova, Selänne, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2017). Although Anglophone authors still account for the majority of CSP work, we have started to hear the voices of authors from further ethnic backgrounds, such as China (Ge et al., 2016; Si et al., 2015), Japan (e.g., Naoi, Watson, Deaner & Sato, 2011), and Africa (e.g., Ikulayo & Semidara, 2011).

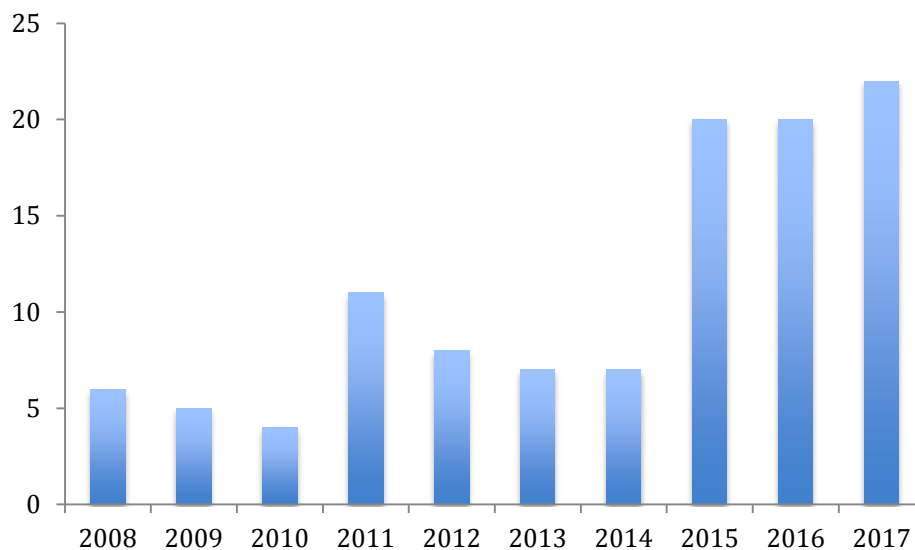


Figure 1 The distribution of numbers of CSP articles published in the eight journals in total from 2008 to 2017 by year.

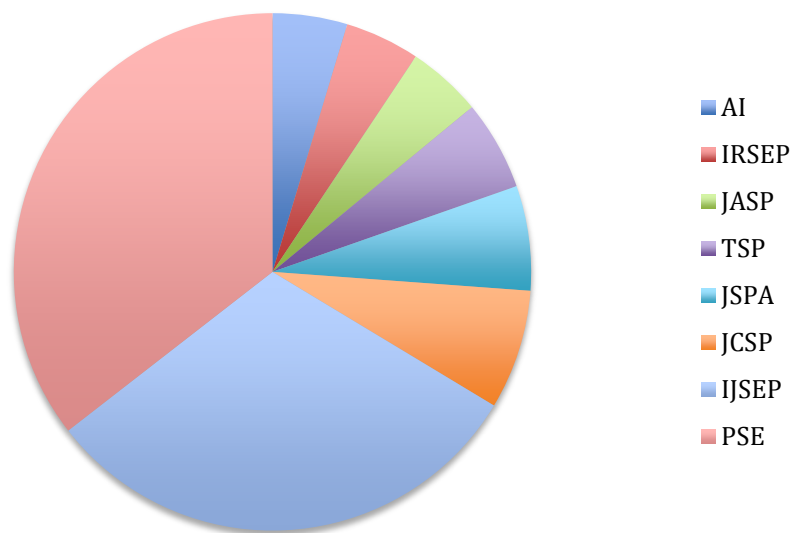


Figure 2 The distribution of the amount of CSP articles published in the eight journals from 2008 to 2017 by journal.

CSP provides the theoretical underpinning for the current research. Following its rationale, I focused on examining the diverse identities of athletes, and how the culturally informed meanings of these identities shape athletes and their sport lives. To make a comprehensive explanation of CSP and the foundation of my project, three tenets of CSP were reviewed to situate the current project: postmodernism; focus on marginalized

identities and issues, and cultural praxis.

Postmodernism. Sport and exercise psychology has been heavily influenced by the discipline of psychology, with its foundations in liberal humanism and social democratic orthodoxies, assuming that reality is a mind-independent existence and measurable, and greatly valuing empiricism, rational thought, and self-consciousness (Fisher et al., 2005; Gill, 2000, Martens, 1987). In the late 20th century, the philosophical movement of postmodernism opened a subversive way to perceive the world, which re-evaluated the entire Western value system (Luzeler, 2001). Postmodernism articulates that the world is in a state of perpetual incompleteness and permanently unresolved. Postmodernism promotes the notion of pluralism, that there is more than one way of knowing, as well as many, truths. From a postmodern perspective, knowledge is relational, articulated from local perspectives with all its uncertainties, complexity and paradox (McGannon & Smith, 2015).

Postmodernists abandon the notions of individual free, self-determining, reflective, the fixed subjects, as they are no more apparent than ideological constructions that assume humans are reasonable in law. Instead, they adopt the notion of decentered subjects, where humans are not in control of their minds and the consciousness is structured by language. Therefore, a subject's self-understanding is subject to external contextual and cultural ideologies. Postmodernism politicizes social problems "by situating them in historical and cultural contexts, to implicate themselves in the process of collecting and analyzing data, and to relativize their findings" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 52). Meaning itself is seen as unstable due to the rapid transformation in social structures. As a result, the focus of research is centered on local manifestations, rather

than broad generalizations. Postmodernism is a Western phenomenon and, as such, is connected to the democratizing processes of the Western world. The merits of postmodern knowledge strengthened the perceptions of democratic pluralism, to examine how it expanded the scope of freedom, and to discern how much other emancipatory cultural discourses such as feminism, multiculturalism and post-colonialism owe to it (Lutzeler, 2001). CSP pioneers were influenced by the ideas from postmodernism, criticizing the mechanical and unethical way to view participant in traditional sport psychology, proposing taking participants as a cultural person with multiple identities and are subject to, as well as influencing, their surrounding environment. CSP researchers expanded from focusing on interpretation and explanation to social transformation, with no particular method, theory, or discourse being used as the best way for understanding the self and identity. instead, all truth claims serve interests that can be located in personal, cultural, and political struggles (Richardson, 2000; McGannon & Johnson, 2009).

Focus on marginalized identities and power relations. Instead of interrogating the essential and universal truth, CSP researchers examine localized understandings of marginalized topics and cultural identities (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenebaum, 2010; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Schinke & Hanrahan 2009; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013). Postmodernists claimed that laws in Western democracies, while seemingly the same for all citizens, are directed at the needs of majorities, not minorities, and such cultural blindness results in discrimination and mistreatment of particular cultures or social categories (Butryn, 2010; Lutzeler, 2001). Furthermore, the Eurocentric academic training leads researchers' views

of the world to a European perspective and an implied belief in the pre-eminence of European culture. As everyone is a cultural being with norms, values, and opinions that stem in part from ancestry and socialization, it has been widely criticized that traditional sport psychology researchers used to collect data from a dominant sample (e.g., male, white collegiate athletes from upper socioeconomic backgrounds) or always understood participants and clients from the dominant culture (i.e., European and American ideology) in sport contexts (Schinke, McGannon, Parham & Lane, 2012). Foucault (1980) pointed out that science and technologies are indispensable to the expression and exercise of power. He proposed that knowledge constitutes the social structures, individual consciousness and the power relations within the reciprocal process. On the contrary, power is also constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and ‘truth’ (Gaventa, 2003). The value system created by social stratification results in different social perceptions and attitudes towards these social identities (Grusky, Ku & Szelenyi, 2001), and indicates the power imbalance in society. The marginalized groups include ethnic minorities in mainstream society, women in patriarchal societies, LGBT members in heteronormative cultures, low socioeconomic status people in capitalist societies, and people with subordinate identities, such as elder, disabled, immigrants. These groups have fewer opportunities to access resources and are subsequently ignored by mainstream academic researchers. Moreover, the social values of social identities are internalized into one’s selves through socialization and acculturation. To empower marginalized groups and promote social justice, CSP encouraged sport psychology researchers and practitioners to use the concepts of reflexivity, culture and local, to increase the awareness of power axes in existence in

research and practices, to centralize the intended community over researchers to prevent programmes from faltering (Schinke, Stambulova, Lidor, Papaioannou, & Ryba, 2016). In the present studies, the national female athletes and their multiple identities were centralized. Through sharing the stories related to these identities, the localized knowledge of the different aspects of female athletes that were often overlooked by the traditional sport psychology were presented.

Cultural praxis. Inheriting the theories and paradigms from cultural studies, CSP is neither straightforward nor value-free. On the contrary, it serves as ethnical and political tools in the form of cultural praxis by drawing on the issues of power, privilege, and oppression. Cultural praxis is conceptualized as the core of CSP, which means challenging social inequalities through knowledge production processes (Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). Gill (2009) stated that applied sport psychology research and practice can advance the public-interest mission of psychology by promoting safe, inclusive physical activity for the health and well-being of all, and by highlighting cultural competence in professional practice. Given that traditional sport psychology perpetuated whiteness concepts and ideology, CSP scholars aim to reveal cultural diverse understandings of sport phenomena (Burtyn, 2010; McGannon & Schinke, 2013). Rather than integrating people's minds through a decontextualized mechanical lens, CSP is a contextually informed mode of inquiry that is developed within local cultural contexts in order to facilitate deeper understandings of the identities and experiences of diverse sport participants (McGannon & Smith, 2015; McGannon & Schinke, 2014; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). CSP

researchers and practitioners strive for decentralizing the current ethnocentric values and norms (i.e., athleticism, sexism, heterosexualism, racism), and open up more inclusive spaces for diverse athletes and multicultural sport settings (McGannon & Schinke, 2015). Instead of grouping people into categories and assuming that everyone in a category is identical, CSP aims at providing sport consultants with cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills so that they have the foundation to work competently with clients from various cultural backgrounds while remaining sensitive to individual differences.

Cultural praxis crystallizes research is more than a purely academic endeavour. It is also an endeavour that needs to address contemporary issues that are meaningful within the lives of marginalized sport participants (Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013). Through focusing on the experiences of marginalized athletes and their marginalized identities, such as female, ethnical minorities, homosexual, disabled, and/or aged, and centralizing their voices and cultural perspectives in researches and practices, CSP researchers and practitioners could move beyond the Universalist and ethnocentric approaches of mainstream sport psychology and open up more meaningful and encompassing understandings of diverse sport participants (Blodgett et al., 2015). By addressing the power and privilege issues in sport settings and research processes, CSP researchers could develop a deeper understanding of how participants' identities are socially constructed and shift in the contexts, and also facilitate the awareness of participants themselves during the research process. Blodgett (2015) utilized participatory action research (PAR) to empower Canadian aboriginal community members engaging in their own circumstances and developed strategies to improve those situations. In the present project, the research itself could be regarded as cultural praxis (Blodgett et al.,

2015; Ryba, 2009). Through centralizing the female boxers' voices about their identities and sport experiences on the National Team, the marginalized identities and issues came into the fore, and female boxers became more aware of their multiple identities and the relationship with their sport performance. Furthermore, the research became devoted to promoting diversity and contributing to a more inclusive sport environment in boxing as well as in the general sport.

2.2 Identity

The term of “identity” is ubiquitous in social science, yet the usage of this term is variable in both its conceptual meanings and theoretical role (Stryker & Burke, 2000). In the foundational work of identity, Erik H. Erikson (1902-1994) described an eight-stage model to illustrate how humans develop the sense of whom they are (i.e. identity) to organize their lives. In his model, the sociocultural aspect meanings of developing shape people as who they are. By successfully completing socio-psychosocial challenges on each life stage (e.g., toddlers need to reconcile the psychosocial forces of autonomy vs. shame/doubt), individuals will develop the corresponding virtue (e.g., will) to next life stage. Identity is conceptualized as a stable and continuous entity residing within one's mind. Erikson (1959) highlighted that “an individual life cycle (psychological) cannot be adequately understood apart from the social context in which it comes to fruition” (p.114) and that “individual and society are intricately woven, dynamically in continual change” (p.114). Following the same sociocultural approach in understanding identity, Stryker and Burke (2000) used identity with reference to “parts of a self-composed of the meanings that persons attach to the multiple roles they typically play in highly differentiated contemporary society” (pp.284). In their view, identities are the

internalized role expectations that are associated with their position in the society. Social structure shapes the individual as people live in their lives, embedded in the larger social structure where there is relative durable interactions and relationships among an array of groups, organizations, and communities, such as gender, race, class, education, sexuality, etc. On the contrary, self also reflects society as it is multifaceted, made up of interdependent and independent, mutually reinforcing and conflicting identities. The higher the salience of an identity relative to other identities incorporated into the self, the greater people commit to the expectations and relationships attached to that identity. In explaining the internal mechanisms of social structure, identity, and social behavior, Burke (1980) noted that the semantic meanings relate to identities and the situational behaviours, wherein people act to match the meanings of situation to identity standard. The meanings of identities are not neutral, but are saturated with appraisal meanings. Tajfel and Turner (2004) argued that people derive a sense of self-worth and social belongingness from their memberships in groups, and so they are motivated to draw favorable comparisons between their own group and other groups, which created the dynamics of prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflicts. Tajfel (1972) defined social identity, including the demographic categories and temporary task-oriented teams, as “individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (pp. 292). These social groups provided their members with a shared identity that prescribes and evaluates who they are, what they should believe and how they should behave. In interacting with others, people make comparisons between their own group and out-group. They are concerned to ensure their own group is positively distinctive; higher status groups fight to

protect their evaluative superiority while lower groups are frustrated, trying to shrug off their social stigma and promote their positivity (Hogg, 2016).

The shifting views of identity above reflected culture-identity link that proposed by Cote (1996) in his groundwork of understanding how larger culture and identity are interrelated. He proposed that the changes in social structure (including political and economic systems) result in different interaction patterns, and then form the particular psyche or personal identity for individual. He described the social structure into pre-modern, early-modern, and post-modern periods, accordingly, people formed their identities in different ways. In the pre-modern society, where the significant relationships of life were controlled by rigid etiquette, young people learned the traditions from their parents, thus their identities were adopted according to the traditions. In the early modern societies, influenced by the industrialization, young people were socialized as individuals with careers to make. They exercised choice and initiative, and thus developed individuality to achieve their identity. In the late modern society, human's problems turned to other people rather than the material world. People need to manage their identities to gain the identity capital to keep their access, so long as the self-images are acceptable. Thus, people discovered their identities according to others' opinions and approval, which led to identity diffusion and lack of stable, long-term commitment. Cote's models coincidentally confirm to the identity theories that successively developed by Erickson (individual confirming to the traditional path of development), Stryker and Burkner (individual committing to the role expectations that assigned by society), and Tajfel and Turner (individual operate identity to gain positive distinctiveness). From his view, identity and the knowledge of identity were changing along the time and

sociocultural context, which help people negotiate life passages in an increasingly individualistic, complex, and chaotic world.

2.2.1 Narrative identity and discursive identity. Building on the previous identity theories, McAdams first proposed that identity might be conceived as

The internalized and evolving story of the self that a person constructs to make sense and meaning out of his or her life. The story is a selective reconstruction of the autobiographical past and a narrative anticipation of the imagined future that serves to explain, for the self and others, how the person came to be and where his or her life may be going. (McAdams, 2011, p.99).

The description above is referred to in relation to narrative identities. People draw on prevailing cultural norms, images, and metaphors to construct themselves, to seek the meanings of their lives, to express themselves both as unique individuals and as social beings who are multiply defined by age, gender, ethnicity, class, and culture, and to direct their future actions (McAdams, 2011; Singer, 2004). Rather than stable and unified entities or traits residing within the individual, the narrative approach conceptualizes people's identities or personalities as cultural constructions, which characterized as fluid, symbolic and accommodating various contradictions (Smith & McGannon, 2015). People situate their narrative identities in particular social situations and with respect to particular demand characteristics and discursive conventions (Gergen, 1991). Thus, identities cannot be addressed in isolation from any cultural context.

Narrative identities are constructed through storytelling, where the individual has the agency to craft and infuse their own life experiences with the existing and available cultural narrative repertoire to make sense of their lives and how they become who they

are (McAdams, 1993). Hence, the perspectives that researchers adopt to explore narrative identities are fluid within the continuum between individual and social relational ends (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). On the individual end, identities are viewed as inner world phenomena, which emphasize authenticity and narrative coherence. In the middle of the continuum, personal and social processes are perceived equally important in identity development, where people negotiate their authentic selves with the social standards. On the social relational end, the views towards narrative identities are more influenced by cultural discourses, where they are performative, fragmented, situational, fluid, multiple, and contextually negotiated.

Narrative and discursive perspectives of athletes' identities have been increasingly attended to in sport psychology. Sparkes and Smith (2002) examined how athletes who have experienced spinal cord injury (SCI) through playing rugby football union defined themselves as disabled, where they found identity disruption because of losing the masculine and athletic part of themselves result in depression and anxiety. Douglas and Carless (2006) proposed that dominant performance narratives in sport that solely emphasizing sport performance and dedication centralized the lose-win meanings for athletes while marginalized other aspects of their lives. Athletes who draw upon performance narrative to construct their own identities, possibly experiencing emotional distress when encountering such sport stressors as injury, major competition, and migration. Ronkainen and colleagues (2016) conducted a meta-study to analyze how narrative and discursive perspectives have been applied in sport psychology to constitute athletic identity development. They emphasized various cultural identity narratives

impact athletes' well-being and career decisions, and dominant narratives surrounding sport and hegemonic masculinity restrict access to alternative narratives.

Discursive study has also been utilized to examine the multiple ways in which dominant understandings of gender, age, and the athletic body are (re)produced and normalised within sporting cultures and institutions and can act to constrain athletes to certain identities and practices. As a nuanced but similar approach with narrative identity, Discursive identities emphasize the central role of language in the dynamic process of identity construction (McGannon & Smith, 2015). In contrast with narrative approach examine how people actively organize their own life experiences within cultural repertoires, discursive identity founded on the proposition that people are situated in multiple cultural discourses, where they were given multiple realities of the world. Even though individuals are not passively positioning themselves in discourses, however, any positions they occupy in a discourse limit their possibilities to certain conventions as to how to feel, think, and behave (Foucault, 1982). For example, Kavoura et al. (2015) found that dominant patriarchal beliefs (e.g., the ideal femininity is represented as youthful, thin and (hetero) sexy body; emotional and nurturing disposition) and gender stereotypes were reflected in the ways in which female athletes negotiated their identities. As cultural discourses are perpetuated with power, discursive identity is used to analyze how cultural beliefs and expectations shape and empower/depower some identities. Thus, certain ways of being and certain identities become culturally dominant while others remain in the margins through language (Weedon, 2004).

Both the narrative and discursive identity approaches contribute to the understanding of the sociocultural meanings on athletic identity constructions. Within

cultural sport psychology (CSP), it has been articulated that athletes should not be regarded as a unitary population who are focused exclusively on sport dedication and performance (Douglas & Carless, 2009). There is a need to recognize athletes as diverse and multifaceted people who have sociocultural identities which are brought forth into, but also extend beyond, their sport contexts. Athletes enact myriad identities relating to family roles (McGannon & Schinke, 2013), religion and spirituality (e.g., Sarkar, Hill, & Parker, 2015), race and ethnicity (e.g., Blodgett, Ge, Schinke, & McGannon, 2017), and student (e.g., Ryba, Stambulova, Selänne, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2017), among further layers that hold worthy practical considerations. These identities intersect with each other to shape how athletes position themselves in sport (Schinke & McGannon, 2015).

Moreover, the unilateral focus on performance has reinforced a hegemonic masculine privilege within sport, which centralizes white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, upper-middle-class identities within athletes, and excludes or marginalizes other identities that do not conform to these values (Butryn, 2010). Male athletes who do not conform to hegemonic ideals of masculinity – such as being aggressive, competitive, independent, and strong, in contrast to opposing ideals of “femininity” – are often positioned as feminine, and exposed in sport to hostility, harassment, and further forms of marginalization (Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar, & Kauer, 2004). Krane et al. (2004) illustrated how sportswomen can also live in a paradox of fitting into social expectations surrounding femininity and competing ideals of athleticism, and how this can relate to unhealthy behaviours such as disordered eating. Cultural contexts are layered, whereby people are shaped by complementary and contradictory dominant cultural values simultaneously through their sport socialization (Ryba & Wright, 2010). Thus, in order to

understand and support athletes as a whole, researchers need to focus on the multiple identities of athletes and their sociocultural meanings to sport. In the current research, I took the perspectives from these narrative and discursive identity approaches, to examine how athletes negotiate their identities within multiple cultural narratives and cultural discourses through language.

2.2.2 The identity issues in sport. The identities of gender, race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status are conceptualized as systems of oppression (Weber, 1998). The identified issues pertaining to these identities and their generated knowledge reflected and reconstructed the power asymmetries for the identity constructions, where the sport inequality is performed. In this section, I present the identity researches that well-discussed in sport psychology and sport sociology. What needs to be noticed is that the outcomes of the research cannot be read as universal realities; Instead, they were more used to reveal social phenomena and provide the evidences of sport injustice discourses. Through this effort, I intend to lead into the topic of intersectionality.

Sport is one of the central institutions that produce masculinity, which automatically segregates women from sport environments by positioning men in more powerful places/roles than women (Roper, 2002). Female athletes endure the additive oppressions both from the patriarchal society and the masculine sport context. For example, female athletes frequently struggle with the social expectations surrounding femininity juxtaposed with the physical demands of their sport (Krane et al. 2004); women were excluded from sport or restricted to participate in some cultures (Balish, Rainham, & Blanchard, 2015); Female athletes are at risk of having an eating disorder, amenorrhea, decreases in bone mineral density medical problems (Torstveit & Sundgot-

Borgen, 2005), and to suffer from sexual harassment (Fasting, Brackenridge, & Sundgot-Borgen, 2004). In the elite sport, the number of sports in which women can compete in is lower compared to their male counterparts (Kay & Jeanes, 2008). Media coverage has been a major contributor to the perceptions of gender ideologies in competitive sport, as most sports contradict with a feminine disposition. Female athletes have to bear various kinds of stereotypes within or outside of sport context, such as LGBT, muscular woman, or sexy model (Kim & Sagas, 2014; Krane & Barber, 2003). Such stereotypes threaten women's athletic performances and their identity construction (Chalabaev, Sarrazin, Hively, & El-Alayli, 2014; Mennesson, 2012). Another issue of gender inequality delineates gender identity as an actively mediated subject position, which is not simply one that is imposed by biological determinants or external social forces (Lenskyi, 1994). So far, most sporting events only accept the categorization of binary sex, which excludes intersex and transgender athletes and marginalizes the queer athletes' experiences (Reeser, 2005).

Sexuality is another well-attended identity in sport, which is situated in the relations among gender, sex, and sexual desire.. As most sports focus on male privilege and are saturated with teamwork and body contact, heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity has been identified in privileged positions, whereas homosexual athletes, effeminate men and masculine women experience great normative pressure, as they do not fit the typical sexuality and gender schemes (Anderson, 2011; Krane, 1998). The experience of being a lesbian or gay in sport varies; Lesbians experienced barriers to acceptance on sport teams because of issues stemming from sexism, the labeling of all female athletes as lesbian, the silencing of lesbians on sport teams, and homophobic

teammates and coaches (Anderson & Bullingham, 2013; Bremner, 2002; Krane, 2001; Krane & Barber, 2003; Sartore & Cunningham, 2010). Mainstream sport spaces and club-based competitive sports are more heterosexualized among men than among women (Elling & Janssens, 2009). Gay men mostly avoid team and contact sports like football and other ‘macho’ sports whereas lesbians are equally or somewhat more likely to be involved in masculine defined sport spaces (Elling & Janssens, 2009). Researchers have produced powerful analyses of homophobia and heteronormativity in sporting cultures. Eng (2008) suggested that the heteronormativity in sport affects both homosexual people and heterosexuals, who are suspected to be gay or lesbian. Hence, in order to avoid being labeled as LGBT members, people are likely to perform resistance behaviors (e.g., teasing, discriminating, harassing, showing confirmative appearance) to non-congruent gender behaviors in sports teams. Homophobia included physical and verbal harassment (Hemphill & Symons, 2009), which keeps athletes from striving for excellence while interfering with and hindering their success in sport (Rotella & Murray, 1991). Rather than taking sexuality alone, gender identity, body appearance/image and sexual orientation are regarded as interrelated identities constituting the major part of each athlete’s identity and also shapes their behaviors in daily life. Queer athletes and transgender athletes pose the biggest threat to traditional gender norms espoused by sport (Griffin & Carroll, 2010; Sartore-Baldwin, 2012). Discrimination against transgender athletes has largely centered on the claim that transgender female athletes have a competitive advantage over genetically born females, a claim that is not supported by medical science (Buzuvius, 2012).

Race is another factor that contributes to identity inequality issues. Lovejoy (2001) found African American women appear to be more satisfied with their weight and appearance than are white women, and they are less likely to engage in unhealthy weight control practices, yet they are more likely to have high rates of obesity. Lawrence (2005) examined eight African American athletes' experiences of race and race discrimination with regard to specific incidents that occurred during their athletic careers and found the athletes were continually conscious of their 'differences.' They were hurt, shocked and outraged by the racial incidents they described, but they also felt empowered and learned from their responses to such incidents sometimes, and they enjoyed the 'team togetherness' facilitated by their sport participation. Moreover, the black athletes were also conscious that the acceptance towards them changed fairly quickly when the condition changes. The black female athletes bear the different oppressions from the white counterparts. Lansbury (2014) examines the athletic careers of six famous African American female athletes and articulated that black women were more likely to participate and compete in individual sports than in team sports, and sport for many African American women of their generations represent a path that to escape poor, rural, or working-class backgrounds, to traveled extensively, to secure a college education, and to reject the cultural stereotypes of African American women. The racism, intersecting with sexism and classism influenced and shaped the opportunities and careers of the six women. Theune (2016) reported a tremendous growth of opportunities for female participating in sports under Title IX, Black females, however, have not benefited to the same degree as their white female counterparts. While combining the gender complaints about female athletes still lagging behind males in participatory opportunities,

scholarships, facilities and equipment, larger structural inequities associated with being black and females remain absent from the political conversation, demonstrating the dual invisibility of black females. Media representations strengthen the stereotypes of different racial athletes (Eastman, Andrew, & Billings, 2001). For example, some races dominate in some sports, such as black athletic superiority (Wiggins, 1989), whereas some races are stereotyped as being physically and athletically inferior to other races, such as East Asians (Chiang, 2012; Martins & Block, 2013).

According to Lansbury's (2014) work, gender, race, class, or socioeconomic status, as components of the intersectional oppression triangle, directly influences female athletes' sport motivation, sport opportunities and sport experience of female athletes. It has been well-documented that people's active involvement in sport is correlated to families' socio-cultural characteristics. The upper class participate in sport more frequently than lower class, such as more involvement in racquet sports and outdoor sports (Eime, Charity, Harvey, & Payne, 2015; Scheerder, Vanreusel, & Taks, 2005). The differentiation of sport participation and spectatorship between socioeconomic statuses is explained as follows. Firstly, elite strata view sport as a lifestyle, through which there are routine social interactions as well as tangible expressions of distinctiveness from other gradations (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2000; White & Wilson, 1999). Second, sport participation depends upon the facilities and financial resources available to the potential participant, whereas the upper class have more paths to the facilities and safe environments, and more spare time to access physical activity (Wilson, Kirtland, Ainsworth, & Addy, 2004). Additionally, children from middle and upper class families perceive fewer barriers to participate in sport while those from lower class families

reported lower levels of both instrumental and affective support from parents, especially in relation to girls (Dollman & Lewis, 2010). Third, various sports carry a range of meanings for different classes, which is imprinted into individuals through the socialization process (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2000), leading to a “taste” for participation. The cultural meaning regarding differentiation of sport is rather pervasive, such as golf, equestrian, marked as striving for perfection, wellbeing, controlled quality, neutral and independent, and these would probably attract middle and upper class people. Boxing on the other hand, which symbolizes “fighting for self” or “survival,” is more satisfying for blue-collar needs. The similar socioeconomic backgrounds of participants create a distinctive subculture for the certain sport, which define the boundaries of different classes, excluding individuals from different classes. The socioeconomic background of athletes plays a significant role in terms of maintaining the life style and skill development. For example, Stone and Cury (2008) indicated that the better exposure to facilities, available time and money would produce a better efficiency and high-level performance.

There are more identities other than those mentioned above that relate to the sport inequality of female athletes, such as religion, ethnicity, age, physicality. The intersectionality framework combined these identities and embedded power relations to examine the co-constitute process of people and culture in different situations (Schinke & McGannon, 2015). Next, I moved to the theoretical background of intersectionality, where the core idea and research traditions inform the foundation of the current research.

2.3 Intersectionality

2.3.1 Intersectionality in feminist studies. In sociology, the term

“intersectionality” was used to depict different social locations that are interrelated, and that mutually constitute an individual’s life experiences and practices (Anthias, 2013). *Social locations*, refers to the relative amount of privilege and oppression that individuals possess on the basis of specific *social identity* constructs, such as gender, race, sexuality, class, education, age, ethnicity, and disability (Hulko, 2009), which are stratified by culture, social system and politics in each contextual and chronographic context (Anthias, 2013, p. 10; Hulko, 2009). Social identity, in psychology, represents socially constructed and group-based categories that people are positioned within, which are fluid and ever-changing as people constantly negotiate the meanings of their own identities with sociocultural norms (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon & Fisher, 2014; Gill & Kamphoff, 2010). In the social constructionist perspective, gender, race, class, sexuality, and so on are “historically and culturally specific, socially constructed power relations that simultaneously operate at both societal and individual level of society” (Weber, 1998, p.13). Thus, the conceptions of these social identities are fundamentally suspect because they are seen as having no basis in reality but are instead constructed by language and discourse (McCall, 2005). In this sense, the conception of social identities captures the subjectivities in terms of how people constructed the meanings of diverse positions in the society. To remain consistent with psychological literature, in this project, I use ‘social identity’ instead of ‘social locations’ to represent the socially constructed categories people position (and are positioned) in as they both carrying both power relations and hierarchical meanings.

The concept of intersectionality has been broadly accepted within feminist study, sociology, politics and management, where power relations and social inequalities are the

core items to investigate (Collins, 2015). Crenshaw (1989) initially coined this term to describe how black women were suffering from interlocking oppressions in social activities due to their multiple subordinate identity presentations. As being excluded from both mainstream antiracism and feminism politics, black women's sufferings were less attended than white women and black men. She conceptualized the process as "a way of framing the various interactions of race and gender in the context of violence against women of color" (p.1296). She also noted intersectionality is different than the anti-essentialism that claims all categories, such as black and white, are socially constructed and there is no need to differentiate people or reproduce more sub-categories, such as black women. Intersectionality admitted categorizes are meaningful to people's lives. Grounded in the postmodernism theories, the intersectionality approach considers categories that are "socially constructed in a linguistic economy of difference" (p. 1296), power stimulated and was manifested in the categorization and subordination process, namely, constructing identities and leading to unequal social and material consequences. Identity is usually situated in the incoherent or binary systems (e.g. race was used to be segregated as black and white, neglecting the existence of mix people) and "the cultural descriptive content of those categories and the narratives on which they are based have privileged some experiences and excluded others" (p.1298) (e.g. the narratives of gender are based on the experience of white, middle-class women and the narratives of race are based on the experience of black men), the intersectionality project contributed to reconceptualising identities and dealing with marginalization. Crenshaw (1991) further noted "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the

particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (p. 24). For example, Black women’s poverty cannot just focus on simple gender-based wage discrimination, but also needs to examine their unpaid family labour, child-care, and patterns of consumer racism (Collins, 2000). Beyond the race, gender, class triangle, other social identities, such as sexuality, ethnicity, age, and physicality were suggested to add into the intersectional framework.

Intersectionality was regarded as the most important theoretical contribution of feminist studies to sociological analysis (McCall, 2005; Mehrotra, 2010). Given the multiplicity of identities and evidence of a hierarchical social structure, intersectionality reveals the multiple dimensions of social life and categories of analysis (McCall, 2005). First of all, no one is ever just privileged or oppressed (Jordan-Zachery, 2007) as people hold multiple identities and the status of their identities are relative to which one is being revealed or subverted. Second, the superordinate and subordinate meanings of social locations could be changed as contexts change (Hulko, 2009). For example, being a female is suitable for aesthetic sports, but present quite a challenge in masculine sports, such as combative sports (Kavoura, Ryba, & Chroni, 2015). Collins (2015) stated intersectionality could be understood as either a field of inclusive studies; an interactive, multilevel analytical strategy; or as a critical praxis of institutions, which offers researchers a large degree of freedom to use this conception in their research. As an emerging “field of study”, intersectionality accommodates a large range of interdisciplinary field, such as gender studies, cultural studies, racial studies, queer studies, media studies. Through examining social formations of multiple, complex inequalities, it provides a more nuanced understanding of how social structures and

cultural representations (i.e. knowledge production) interconnect. As an “analytical strategy”, intersectionality produces new knowledge of the world by adopting an “intersectional way of thinking about the sameness and differences and its relation to power” (p.11) that is used to investigate social phenomena of inequalities and cultural diversity. In investigating how intersecting identities produce distinctive social experiences for specific individuals and social groups, intersectionality was used to examine the possibilities of identity categories creating solidarity and cohesion for the minority group members. As a form of “critical praxis”, intersectionality is connected to social justice. Intersectionality projects are not a neutral and value-free. On the contrary, practices are foundational to intersectional analysis, where scholarship and practice are recursively linked.

Valentine (2007) argued people view themselves differently according to the spaces they inhabit, that in some spaces they are more likely to feel accepted and valued than they do in other spaces. People who are dominant within a particular space have the power to construct the hegemonic culture of the space, making out those who belong and those who do not. Thus, people strategically prioritize particular identity positions in certain contexts to gain the social advantage. Ratna (2013) argued that people are not simply free to choose which identities to play-up or play-down as they wish, which is determined by social structures. A structure agency is the central to exploring how and why people prioritise some identity positions over others. Eastal (2003) used a kaleidoscope metaphor to explain how “our perception is the outcome of a multitude of filters that twist and turn according to our own individual experience and knowledge” (p. 1), and which shape our sense of the world around us. The “multitude of filters” are our

intersecting identities or social locations, from which people perceives the world in different ways due to the knowledge and experience received based on their identities groups. In practicing intersectionality as an analytic strategy, researchers also proposed multiple lenses to investigate the distinctive experiences and social inequality.

McCall (2005) presented three approaches to study the complexity of intersectionality: anticategorical complexity, intercategorical complexity, and intracategorical complexity. An anticategorical approach advocates for eliminating the categories used to section people into differing groups. The intercategorical approach is concerned with the existing distinctions or inequality among social groups and how they change over time. Finally, the intracategorical approach reveals the heterogeneousness within each group, which on one hand, recognizes the importance of social categories to understand social experiences, while the other, questions the boundaries of distinction. Intracategorical focuses on a marginalized subgroup within the large group, upon people who cross the boundaries of constructed categories. Choo and Ferree (2010) proposed three styles of conducting intersectionality research as group-centered, process-centered, and system-centered. For group-centered analysis, the multiply-marginalized groups and their perspectives are at the center of the research. For the process-centered, it highlights how the power structured the society and operated across particular institutional fields, wherein the specific context, comparison of power relations, social constructive processes and dynamics were attended. For the system-centered, it moves beyond the singular structuring process and specific inequality, but focuses on how the process is interactive, historically co-determining, and complex in shaping the entire social system. Dill-Thornton and Zambrana (2009) stated that intersectional analyses are, and have

historically been, characterized by four key theoretical interventions: (a) placing the lived lives and experiences of people of color and other marginalized groups at the center of the development of theory, (b) exploring the complexities of individual identities and group identities while making visible the ways in which diversity within groups are often ignored and essentialized, (c) demonstrating the ways in which social inequality and oppression in the interconnected domains of the power structure are manifested, and (d) promoting social justice and social change through research and practice. The above analysis approach offers a framework for researchers to follow. In the current research, I would not only focus on the nuanced life experiences of athletes with various intersecting identity forms, but also how the cultural and institutional relations of power shaped these experiences. Meanwhile, as a psychology project, I also attended to the subjectivity of athletes in terms of how they construct and interpret the meanings with the intersecting social identities, and how they react to the identity challenges.

In the field of psychology, there has been an increasing interest of intersectionality research. Hurtado (1997) proposed an integration of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) and intersectionality for understanding how the intersecting social identities of race, gender and class become salient in different context, which move the study of social identities beyond single identity to the contextual salience of multiple identities. Cole (2009) suggested psychologists bridge the gap by examining the diversity, differences, and commonalities within, between, and among the social identities. She proposed three questions to guide the study: who is included within the category, what role does inequality play, and where are there similarities? She criticized the traditional approach that engages the social identities as self-evident demographic

items, and endeavours to include the neglected groups and reconceptualise the meanings and consequences of social categories. Syed (2010) suggested using intersectionality as a framework, rather than a theory, as he thought intersectionality is not a scientific theory used to generate predictions or causality of human behaviour or mental processes. He proposed two levels questions for psychologists to operate within intersectionality research: first, using intersectionality as an analytical tool for understanding structural oppression or examining how individuals come to an awareness of the role of the intersecting identities in their own lives; secondly, how a theory can morph as it crosses disciplinary lines. Rosenthal (2016) called on researchers to incorporate intersectionality to attend structural-level issues. In doing so, social researchers can promote more social justice and equity central agendas to the field of psychology. There are large bodies of scholarship illustrating the adverse effects of both interpersonal and structural oppression, inequality, and stigma across the spectrum of human experience and behavior.

The difficulties of integrating the sociological intersectionality to the psychology project lies in the epistemologies, where the identity categorises in psychology were traditionally conceptualized as fixed and isolated variables that differentiate people into different mental realities, while in sociological intersectionality projects, social categorises are the products of complex power system, which are relational, constructive, and relational. In psychology, people have agency and autonomy to choose who they are, while in intersectionality projects, people underplay their agency in the complex constellations of power systems. As an interdisciplinary project, the current research would be more biased towards adopting the sociological intersectionality approach to examine the power relationships and identity challenges in certain sport contexts. In order

to contribute to the psychology scholarship and practical implications to sport psychologists, this research also strived to capture the individualized internal constructs of these inequalities.

2.3.2 Intersectionality studies in sport. Utilizing sport to stimulate social development and facilitate social justice has been increasingly profiled in academic scholarships, within which sport was recognized as a tool that could both facilitate and undermine social integration, thus can reproduce discrimination, oppression, and inequality (e.g. Jarvie, 2011; Schinke, Stambulova, Lidor, Papaioannou, & Ryba, 2016). Sport is a masculine domain, traditionally reserved for young, strong, heterosexual males (Lenskyj, 1990; Messner, 1992). Therefore, the cultural practices in most sports marginalise female, gay, ageing, racialized bodies that are socially constructed in opposition to white heterosexual masculine standards, taken as normative in defining and giving meaning to sport activities (Donnelly, Darnell, Wells, & Coakley, 2007; Elling, De Knop, & Knoppers, 2001; Schinke et al., 2013). Many scholars proposed that rather than understanding athletes' sporting experiences solely through the lens of athletic identity, it is necessary to consider other social categories such as gender, class, ability, nationality or race, to have a stronger understanding of the range of diversity of athletes and their concerns (Carless & Douglas, 2013; Douglas & Carless, 2009; Gill, 2001; Krane, Barber & McClung, 2002; Ryba & Wright, 2010; Ryba, 2017; Roper, Fisher, & Wrisberg, 2005; Ronkainen, Kavoura, Ryba, 2016; McGannon & Simth, 2015; Schinke & McGannon, 2015).

Even though the idea of cultural diversity of athletes has been widely accepted, there is seldom empirical evidences that offer a guide to investigate this issue in sport

psychology. Reviewing the present projects framed as “intersectionality” in sport, there are few empirical researches published in the fields of sport sociology and sport management. For example, Anderson and McCormack (2010) examined the influence of the racial categories of White and Black, and the sexual categories of gay and straight sporting American men. These authors highlighted the exclusion of athletes who were both black and gay, and found the culturally perceived differences of (straight) black and (White) gay men. Withycombe (2011) examined how the stereotypes of gender and race structure the oppressions for African American female athletes, and found that these two stereotypes significantly impacted their sport experiences at all levels of sport participation. Similarly, Price (2015) illustrated how the black women were marginalized by the organizational culture within the Intercollegiate Athletics Administration in U.S., based on the ideological structures of gender and race. Price used the intersectionality framework, which proved useful in examining the confluent nature of identity. Walker and Melton (2015) explored the intersection of race, sexuality, and gender in the context of collegiate sport and found that sport is governed by the norms, traditions, and preferences of the dominant group (i.e. White, male, heterosexual) rather than by policy, while the minority lesbians have few ways to fit into the group. Dagkas (2016) examined the social justice within health pedagogy and youth sport among disadvantaged youth groups in society. He argued that the intersecting identities of race, ethnicity and class need to be heard and legitimized to avoid neglecting and ‘othering’. Hitherto, most intersectionality studies in sport sociology and sport management circulated on the identity spectrum of gender, race, sexuality, and class, focusing on the social justice issues of certain group of people. As rooted in sociology, the paradigms and language

through out the articles are different with psychological traditions, which result in the difficulties to be understood by sport psychology researchers.

In sport psychology, apart from examining how certain cultural identities such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, age and other axes of identity impacted athletes' sport experiences. Researchers also need to expand work on the social construction of multiple identities interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels within certain sport subculture. To integrate intersectionality framework into sport psychology studies, researchers need to extend their vision to the contextual dynamics: firstly, how the subculture of sport interacts with the mainstream culture to shape athletes' identity; secondly, how the interlocking oppression system is meaningful to the athletes' psychological well-being and sport performance; thirdly, how sports empower the socially disadvantaged groups of people to increase their well-being.

Subculture is defined as any system of rules, or values or norms shared by, or participated by, a sizeable minority of people within a particular culture (Jarvie, 2006), which distinguishes them from mainstream culture and other subcultures. Members of a subculture were situated with a distinctive and symbolic use of life style, which includes fashions, mannerisms and languages, through learning process. For instance, Anderson (1999) explored gender construction in snowboarding and found that snowboarders construct their sport as a masculine practice by appropriation of other cultural masculinities, interaction and clothing styles, violence and aggression, and emphasized heterosexuality. The particular sport practices also construct people's psyche. Hirko (2007) outlined the unique nature of team sport athletics with its common goal of cooperation, which provides an opportunity for individual athletes to be perceived as

teammates first, and not as members of their racial group. This shift of focus increases interracial interactions, and which positively impacts both white and racial minority athlete's cognitive development and academic success. Subcultures have been at times referred to in relation to broader mainstream cultures (Jarvie, 2006). Shifting between the mainstream culture and sport subculture, athletes keep negotiating with multiple inheriting and disseminating norms, customs, and ideologies, to acquire the skills and habits necessary for participating within various contexts. For the athletes situating in the sport context, it would be worth to explore how to negotiate and balance the identities in and out of sport and how the cultural athletic identity intersects with other social identities.

Following the rationale of intersectionality (Collins, 2015), intersectionality analysis also brought the insight of the contextual oppression, exploitation, and submission of athletes' identity to promote social justice practices of and through researches. Athletes transitioning from mainstream culture to sporting subculture and constituting categories of differentiation created interlocking hierarchies in sport context (Weiss, 2001), which implicated athletes' sport experience and wellbeing. Jones, Glimmeyer and McKenzie (2005) explored the experiences of a former elite swimmer, whose career was interrupted and finally terminated by disordered eating. Their finding illustrated how the compliance within a culture of slenderness and the creation of strong athletic identity led to a vulnerable sense of self, which, when disrupted, critically contributed to the development of an eating disorder. Ratna (2013) examined British Asian female footballers' experiences and signalled how their particular identities articulate in and through the spaces of women's football. She argued that by playing-up

gender and sexuality, and concomitantly playing-down racial identity, British Asian females are able to negotiate inclusion within the spaces of women's football. However, this does not mean that they automatically become valued insiders. At other times, and in other spaces, their marginalisation from sport is clear.

Sport reinforces social inequalities in that it is a component of culture and it is influenced by social rules and structures (Ryan & Martin, 2013). On the other side, sport also provides opportunities for change by articulating “the complex interplay of race, nation, culture and identity in very public and direct ways” (Carrington & McDonald, 2002, p. 2). Godwell (2000) proposed that Indigenous peoples’ involvement in sport could be attributed more to a positive cycle of belief to racial stereotypes of physicality, self-confidence in skill acquisition and practice, improved performance, belief reinforcement and, finally, reaffirming Aboriginal identity formation, where the positive self-construction would increase the indigenous retention in non-indigenous dominated fields. Furthermore, sport is also a field to empower women to improve gender relations and to challenge the hegemonic masculinity in the patriarchal society (Ogunniyi, 2015). Women tend to look to acquiring power through sport rather than express power as it does with men. Female athletes develop new images of women through resistive participation in sport. To validate gender equality in sport, sport feminist scholars proclaim giving women power and authority in sport discourse and organizations (Burke, 2015). Women’s involvement in exercise and fitness activities shows substantial benefits including increased self-esteem, personal development, physical power and wellbeing (Kay & Jeanes, 2008). Sport is also a place for non-heterosexual people to challenge traditional stereotypes and heteronormativity (Ravel & Rail, 2007). It is reported that

sport is a refuge for non-heterosexual women and men have discovered mainstream sports spaces where they can participate without being confronted too much with homonegativity and heteronormativity (Elling & Janssens, 2009), as well as a place to challenge the norm. For example, gay men strive for a muscular body to change their feminine stereotype (Adams, Anderson, & McCormack, 2010). The emergence and development of gay/lesbian clubs provide the opportunities of combining sport performance, being 'out' and social connectedness for non-heterosexuals (Elling, De Knop, & Knoppers, 2003). With the increasing acceptance and visibility of LGBTQ community in the North American society, a more inclusive environment could be expected (Bush, Anderson, & Carr, 2012; Campbell, Cothren, Rogers, & Kistler, 2011). On the other side, sport also facilitates class mobilization, as it is presented as a potential source of escape and mobility for talented working-class sports performers (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2000). Many governments have promulgated policies promoting sport and exercise, and an increasing number of people participate in sport, and lower and higher-class locations have changed their sport preferences; for example, boxing attracts more middle class women (Scheerder, Vanreusel, & Taks, 2005; Jarvie, 2011).

2.4 Summary of Contentious Issues

In light of the aforementioned literature, it is evident that, despite the criticisms that have been levelled against mainstream sport psychology for taking athletes' cultural identities as a marginalized topic, additional research is needed to explore the holistic aspects of athletes within sport psychology. Only recently has a more socially and academically transformative agenda been articulated through the emergence of CSP as an alternative area of inquiry that emphasizes culture as a driving force of research and

practice (Ryba, 2005; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke et al., 2012). As CSP continues to grow and expand, additional research is needed to continue exploring diverse experiences generated from different aspects of identities. The present project seeks to add to the empirical research using intersectionality approach through localized research in certain sport contexts, and connects them to institutional power dynamics. The present work also expands and adds to multiple theoretical/conceptual papers that have highlighted the importance of praxis within CSP (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba, 2005; Ryba et al., 2013; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba & Wright 2005; Schinke et al., 2012). The current research expands contribution to CSP and to sport psychology by using an intersectionality framework within a unique sport context (i.e., elite women's boxing) through a cultural praxis approach to centralize the women's identities and link these to performance and make applied recommendations.

Taking insights from the aforementioned literature, it was evident that, for this research to be a meaningful contribution to both the intersectionality research and CSP literature. I dismantled intersecting identities as the cultural backdrop of sport psychology to provide a new angle, explaining athletes' sport experiences as well as to promote an inclusive sport environment. Given that multiple sociocultural constraints exist in high profile performance, the Canadian Female Boxing Team was selected as a suitable match for this project. The diversity of national female boxers' cultural backgrounds fit the intersectionality framework well. To validate this topic, I will counter the ways in which different identities, such as sexuality, socioeconomic status, education, and language have been storied as disenfranchising female boxers through issues of discrimination, isolation, misrepresentation, stereotyping, and the silencing of voices. Through encouraging female

boxers to share their identities with their own stories, the research was more likely to accentuate the strengths and knowledge of national female boxers and emphasize their potential to mobilize meaningful change at the institutional level. The intent of such efforts was to generate emancipatory outcomes that would challenge sport inequalities and address a National Boxing Team's needs.

Chapter Three

This chapter outlines the qualitative research approach that informs about the current project. First, I introduced the social constructionism epistemology, a qualitative tradition in which this project is steeped. Second, I uncovered the research context, including research participants, and their affiliated institutions, of this project. Third, my reflexive process is articulated through a series of personal narratives. Within this section, the data collection process (i.e., art-based method) is delineated, consisting of mandala drawings and conversational interviews led by a senior research assistant. Forth, the data analysis procedures are overviewed, encompassing an interpretive thematic analysis, ethnographic creative nonfiction and visual storytelling. Finally, the authenticity of this project and the structure of the results are presented.

3.1 The Social Constructionist Qualitative Inquiry

3.1.1 The social constructionism epistemology. Social constructionism is an epistemology branch in philosophy, which aligns with the postmodern movement. Social constructionists asserted that knowledge of the world is always a human and social construction (Crotty, 1998), wherein the identities of gender, race, sexuality, et al. have no basis of realities, but are constructed by language and cultural discourses. Instead of taking knowledge as "the neutral discovery of an objective truth" (Castelló & Botella, 2006, p. 263), social constructionists' view "knowledge as a compilation of human-made constructions"(Raskin, 2002, p. 4) with power saturated in it. Social constructionists are concerned with meaning, power and language. They focus on the meanings placed on an object or event by a society, and adopted by the inhabitants of that society with respect to how they view or deal with the object or event. In that respect, a social construct as an

idea would be widely accepted as natural by the society, but may or may not be the same one that shared by those outside the society or other cultures. CSP scholars believe people cannot step outside of their culture to constitute their identities, experiences and behaviours (McGannon et al., 2012), and that their identities and experiences are fluid, multiple, fragment and ever changing within the contextual discourses (McGannon & Smith, 2015; McGannon & Spence, 2010). The present study examines how the female boxers construct their identities in both Canadian culture and the National Boxing Team, and how the cultural identity constructions (re)shape the meanings of their life experience. The constructionist lens informs the underpinnings of this research that first of all, meanings of the social identities were constructed by cultural, historical, and ideological power relationships, rather than adhering solely within individuals' minds or decontextualized experiences; secondly, female boxers developed stories with the interviewer about how they negotiate and affirm the meanings of their multiple identities within particular culture contingent context; lastly, herein, I "capture" athletes' stories in relation to who they "are" and interpret them as socially (re)produced (i.e., as individuals who come into contact with others) based on my own knowledge and experiences.

3.1.2 Qualitative inquiry. Challenging the traditional scientific way of knowing, there has been a qualitative movement in psychology since 1960s. Gergen, Josselson, and Freeman (2015) described the qualitative movement in psychology, invigorating and enriching the psychology inquiry and its potentials, in three aspects; a.) bringing a pluralist orientation to knowledge, such as hermeneutic, constructionist, and praxis knowledge; b.) flourishing the discipline as a whole with integrating a range of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives; and c.) enhancing communication with the

society and the world by focusing on the topics of justice, poverty, community building and oppression. The movement marked two changes: first, people were centralized in the way of knowing, where their subjectivity and expertise of their own experience were attended; second, the academic research were no longer value-free, where the biased social, historical and political implications were explicated. In sport psychology, Culver, Gilbert and Sparks (2012) reviewed the qualitative research articles published in *JASP*, *JSEP*, *TSP* from 2000 to 2009 and found an increase from 17.3 % for the 1990s to 29% in the last decade, and the positivist/post-positivist approaches maintained a predominant position in sport psychology research by that time. In recent years, a range of methods derived from hermeneutic, post-structural, and social constructionist epistemologies have become increasingly applied to understand the phenomena within sport and athletes. As witnessed in the proliferation of qualitative research in sport exercise, Smith & Sparkes (2017) edited the *Routledge Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* to offer the diverse established and emerging qualitative methods in our area. In this volume, data collecting methods (e.g. interviews, observations, visual, media, documents), data analysing methods (e.g. thematic analysis, phenomenology, narrative analysis, discourse analysis), data presenting method (e.g. creative non-fiction methods) and the validity and trustworthiness have been well regarded. Qualitative inquiry was also widely used in CSP as it could facilitate a rich account of marginalized culture and participants, and conform to the agenda of critical cultural studies that focus on social difference, distribution of power, and social justice (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba & Wright, 2010).

Qualitative inquiry is identified as suitable for revealing the complexity and flexibility of intersectionality work (Syed, 2010). Through the literary and non-literary personal accounts (interviews, poems, visuals, music, and handcrafts), participants could express themselves freely and the contextual information could be seen through the text. The changes and fluidity in these identities' meanings could also be delineated. Moreover, the qualitative approach shortened the distance between researcher and participants, wherein the participants and their stories were centralized in the research process. As a praxis project, the interactive process between research and participants could provoke self-explorations for the participants. Through reflecting and recounting how their experiences related to their multiple identities with the senior interviewer, the participants would keep formulating the sense of who they are, become aware of the privilege/oppression experiences and the power issues in the institutional system and the society. The athletes would feel empowered or concerned about their beings as a whole rather than just as their athlete self. The corresponding strategies to eliminate the system of injustice and promoting cultural diversity in sport could be generated based on the athletes' accounts. In sum, the qualitative approach unfolded the research in a more humanity and ethic manner.

3.2 The Research Context

The current research is part of the project *Intersecting identities of National Team boxers* funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC 2014). The project was carried out with support from the Canadian National Boxing Team and supported by Boxing Canada. My supervisor, Dr. Robert Schinke, was the primary investigator of this research project. Meanwhile, he is also the only sport

psychology consultant of the Canadian National Boxing Team for both female and male boxers. He has been involved in this team for more than 20 years and engages regularly with this context, which permits a formative and time efficient examination of the topic while giving access to these elite level athletes. This project was also supported by Boxing Canada, who is the national governing body for the sport of boxing in Canada recognized by the Canadian Olympic Committee and committed to the ongoing development of more inclusive athlete services, including the promotion, organization and coordination of the sport of boxing for the advancement of the sport and its members of all levels and ages. Through my supervisor and Boxing Canada's connections, ten national female boxers were recruited for the project, spanning ages from 18 to 31. Some of the boxers are first year members to the Canadian National Boxing Team, and some have stayed on the team for more than 10 years. There are Anglophone, Francophone, bilinguals and at least four boxers who openly belong to LGBT groups. Of these athletes, there are also immigrant athletes, native athletes, and African American athletes. They are situated in different weight categories and come from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The diversity of the National Team provides rich materials to study the intersectionality of elite athlete's identities.

3.3 Researcher Reflexivity

The construction of knowledge in research is a reflexive process (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Self-reflexivity creates the cultural sensibility to highlight complex interactions of power and socio-cultural differences encountered in multi-cultural sport contexts (Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012). As a tool to reveal how one's own value, biological backgrounds, social positions and characteristics, reflexivity

impacts the method of acknowledging and understanding in research and consulting (Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012). In qualitative research, the researcher's subjectivities enable the research process to stay beyond the neutral and mechanical level. Compared to positivist approaches, the deeper the researcher's involvement, the harder it is to draw a convincing conclusion on the personal understanding and explanation of the data. As it is in qualitative research, researchers' interest is in understanding the meanings of the participants' words by interpretation and relating them to their historical and contextual environments. There is no doubt that the deeper the analysis, the more involvement researchers become to the outcomes. While at the same time, researchers inevitably port their own backgrounds, expectations and projections in the analyzing processes (Dale, 1996; McGannon & Johnson, 2009; McGannon & Smith, 2015; Sparkes, 1998). Hence, self-reflexivity represents a way to reduce the subjectivity by exposing the subjectivity directly, as it is necessary to keep the research's rigor and ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Reflexivity has a further goal of drawing attention to power issues in the research process. Schinke et al. (2012) proposed the question of "how do my identity and social position bring me to ask particular questions and interpret phenomena in particular ways?" and "How do my own identity, self-related views, values and social position privilege some choices in the research process over others?" as strategies of reflexivity. Following this autobiographical form of reflexivity, in the present section, I illustrated my own reflexivity following these instructions.

3.3.1 A personal introduction. I am a Chinese, female, 28 years old turning 29, a Ph.D. student, and a sport psychology practitioner in amateur boxing and varsity women's soccer. Throughout the time I wrote and rewrote this section, my thinking and

my identity have changed a lot, spanning three years. During these past three years, I have experienced multiple frustrating transitions in my life, which shaped the way I understand this project and compose this dissertation. Here, I presented my changes to illustrate my embodied experience of culture, identity, and boxing.

The project was launched by my supervisor, whereby the topic and questions were derived from his researching and practicing experience, and rooted in the North American Culture. Three years before, when I was young, first getting into Canada and starting to know this project, my nationality identity, language identity, education identity, my gender identity, and family's socioeconomic status were extremely important to me, because at that time, these identities differentiated me with the surrounding people. The nationality identity was significant in my acculturation process, because I was very uncomfortable and had to learn and assimilate myself into the claimed standpoints of this project. The project was derived from the diversity of population in North American society, where the individualistic and democratic discourses were saturated in the cultural and political milieu. While in Chinese society, the philosophy of Confucianism was dominant, where the values of *Mean* (it means all activities and thoughts one had have to adhere to moderation, which could result in harmony in action, and eventually in a harmonious society) and the compatibility of the opposites were highlighted in the cultural discourses. Rooted in Collectivism culture, Chinese emphasize adjusting or accommodating with the environment in order to pursue "harmony" rather than changing or reforming the environment. Hence, prioritising the collective interests is rated more important than fighting for one's own identities. Furthermore, being situated a hierarchical society, I probably have different perceptions of power relationship than the

western researchers. From my understanding, the hierarchical relationships among different identity positions represent obligations and rights rather than oppressions and privileges. Different identities are complimentary and coexist rather than exclusive and competing. For example, instead of seeing the patriarchal society positioned males in superordinate status relative to female, I tend to see males and females compensate with each other. As a result, it was really hard for me to understand and integrate the conceptions of oppression and social justice in my project. Deep in my mind, I was trying to avoid seeing the social differences and the asymmetrical power relations. I was very uncomfortable to realize the unjust situations and the struggle of the oppressed people. I would rather see the two opposite groups that form the hierarchical relationships to actually complement each other. Moreover, I took the individual's sacrifices for the collective interests for granted, rather than viewing it as oppression of inequality. As a normal young female student in China (moderate in every aspect) and lived narrowly in the Ivory Tower, I was rarely aware that there were any significant social differences, which led me to be less resonant with privilege and oppressed experiences.

My fixation on Chinese identity was also due to the culture shock in the acculturation process and the living reality as I was alone in a foreign country where I had no place to belong to. For a long time, I kept reminding myself that in China, people do not think, act, and behave in this way. The study of decolonization perspectives reinforced me to stick to the Chinese style. I always compared the western and Chinese ideologies and insisted to use the Chinese one no matter what. I resisted changing, and I did not want to be brushed into white, because that is not part of myself. As acculturation is an interactive and reciprocal process, the relationships between the others and me are

highly important. However, there were two barriers for me to build intimate relationships with western people: language and mental distance. Language is the tool that connect with people and claim one's own identity. Due to the language incompetency, my confidence when socializing with people decreased. Adding to that I am used to have closer mental distances with peoples than people in western culture, it was always frustrated when you want to close to people yet cause uncomfortableness to them.

The acculturation process lead to the collapse and reconstruction of my personal identity, because I need to change who I was, learn the new rules, norms, values, to adjust the new context. Through the repeated embodied acts and practices, I progressively change the perspectives of myself in terms of what kind of person I am, and how could I relate to others. Adding to the studying of postmodernism, which highlighted the fragmented, fluid, contextual, and ever-changing, immersing in discourses of culture, I remember at that time, I felt so unreal in my life. When I went to the grocery store, I felt so aimless and lost. Right now, as I spend a more time in Canada, I have become more used to life here. I built up a rather stable social network. I understood and gradually immersed into the Canadian culture. I started to develop a sense and appreciate the Canadian way of thinking and doing. In the accomplishment in acculturation, I could understand my project better.

The second significant identity in my study life is gender. I was the only-daughter of my family and my parents are very democratic, letting me make the decisions of my life. I received full respect and love as I grew up with my parents, and also from school. Sometimes, I was the one being spoiled. I never had the feeling being oppressed by the patriarchal society. Moreover, I always want to rebelled the traditional ideologies of

being a girl or woman, but I never felt sorry about being a girl. However, the illusion broke since I enrolled into the feminist studies, when I experienced the unprecedented social pressure of being a single woman, and Ph.D., and a feminist. The combination of the three identities made me a weirdo in others' eyes. Within the gendered society, who am I seemed too powerful and aggressive. Before I didn't believe in it, and didn't care about it. But with the age growing, and when in the extremely new environment, when someone I care intently told me that I was not like a girl. I started question myself. There were a few friends, both male and female, from Canadian, Chinese, and even Arabic background, made the comments that I was too boyish to be attractive. I start question myself, I cannot find an appropriate way to express my identity. In traditional view, women are more adorable when they have less power and authority. I submit myself to the soft, submissive, inferior female roles unconsciously, and intensively be less powerful or in a humble way to avoid being isolated. I tended to refuse my Ph.D. identity. However, this act made me more uncomfortable and unconfident. From my own experiences, learning the standpoints of feminism is frustrated for me. As being raised up as the center of the family, I was never ever felt I was oppressed by males or by patriarchal ideologies. On the contrary, I always took advantage of being a girl. I completely disagree with constructing the realities that women are subordinate and vulnerable. The images about women that I learned through my life experience were rather diverse and powerful than what I read in the feminism scholarship. I thought feminism is rooted in the western ideology where the individualism, equality, and freedom are valued over love and sacrifice. This leads to the interpretations of the meanings of relationship and interactions between women and men are rather destructive.

However, through learning and imitating the feminist articles, I gradually assimilated to the feminist ideas and agree with women suffer by their submission to the subordinate gender role that assigned by the patriarchal ideologies.

The third identity, a significant part of me and influences the analysis of my project, was socioeconomic status. My family is in the working class, and the status was the most belittled identity of mine. I wasn't aware of it before, because I was just average in China. But in Canada, when I socialize with the Chinese community, the only standard to judge people came from financial status, which gave me a lot of discomforts and made me rethink my position in the society. Money and independence, which I never thought about before, became a huge worry to me and depowered me a lot. In the small community, financial status of one's family was fair enough to distinguish between center and edge. Unfortunately, this small community was the only place I could find some familiarity and belongings. Hence, in analysing the data, I was resonant so much when an athlete talked about how she felt uncomfortable in the team because the teammates were richer than her, and how she felt overwhelmed upon receiving commercial sponsors. When I received my scholarship (not a lot of money), I also felt I was rich and it distracted me from work.

During my studies, I also work as a sport psychology consultant in the local boxing club - Top Glove Boxing - for three years. The boxers there were diverse, most of them 15-40 years old male and coming from the working-class without high educated degrees. My family background, to some extent, facilitates my ability to interact and engage with the boxers at the local club, because most of the boxers are from the working-class families and are pursuing their goals, just like me. In the beginning, I

found it is easy to get close to them, because I can understand and relate to their living style, their strengths and their struggles. Every Thursday, I went there and gave them a psychological workshop and accompanied them as they participated in several tournaments. The backgrounds of the boxers in the club are rather complicated, with most of them being young males, with only one female lesbian boxer. Some of these athletes are workers in a mining factory, some of them are college students, some white-collars, some immigrants, some disabled, and a few are refugees from Syria. The chief coach in the club also continues to work with the Canadian National Boxing Team. He is an Italian and a national champion. The coach has a strong personal style, which funds the club's culture. I built friendships with the boxers, and saw their journey up and down. The more connection with them, the deeper understanding I gained about the sport. They told me boxing could make them feel complete and strong, or to release some abundant energy. When I stood by the ring, seeing the boxers being punched in the face directly, seeing them push themselves to move in the third round, seeing their ambition to win and their tactics, habitus, and strength, all of these exposures permitted me an overall picture of how the boxing world is and how the boxers survive and, in some instances, flourish in the environment. However, at the end of the three years' volunteer work, I felt so exhausted in the environment. Not to say I have rare feedback from the boxers, I just had nothing to offer. I noticed the corporation between the boxers and I relied on interpersonal relationships more than professional help. I personally do not agree with building interpersonal relationships with athletes in other life aspects out of sport, because it costs too much emotional work on part of the sport psychologists.

Personally, I do not like boxing because it is too violent and cruel for me to watch.

I remembered once when I did a pre-competition talking with a lesbian athlete in our gym about her anxiety, I asked “what are you exactly afraid?” She answered, “anyway, you will take punches on your face.” Then I realized, for the boxers, this sport might not only be a technique and skill thing. The embodied experiences of practicing this sport generate deeper meanings about how boxers relate themselves to this sport. In the boxing gym, the boxers came to practice for various reasons, such as a teenage boy coming because he was bullied at school; couple of boxers came to seek the completeness of themselves; some muscular mining workers came to release energy and get rid of the things that once screwed up their lives. The boxing gym is just like an asylum that accommodates people who were marginalized in the mainstream society. The atmosphere of the gym was repressing for me, because I just unconsciously assumed the boxers were struggling with their lives and were desperate to prove themselves through this sport. The sport and pursuing excellence became less attractive when being embedded with such heavy meanings. I felt it is hard to implement the psychological intervene methods to the athletes. During the analyzing period, I also practiced kick boxing in another club. I didn’t train in my work gym because there were too many boys there. As a woman, I felt it was inconvenient to train with men. It is smelly and the intensity is too much for me. From my personal experience, while I punching the bags, how to execute the skills and techniques took much of my brain. There is no space to think about emotion and stress, not even to pursue some spiritual comforts. However, hitting the bags sometimes really made me feel strong and powerful.

In the past three years, I also worked in a varsity women soccer team to help the athletes prepare for competition, and to facilitate their development. I took different

strategies to work with these two teams. In the last two years, compared to the boxing club, I felt more attached with the women soccer team, probably because the players were young university girls and the team was more organized. The head coach and I have reached the agreement to develop the young players to be better women, not just good soccer players. I applied more systematic and various interventions on the soccer team to tackle competition inefficiency and team dynamics. I was also inspired by the positive traits from the coach and the young girls, such as tough, brave, generous, and hard working. We had a better relationship due to the same identities and experiences we shared (i.e., female, young, educated, student-athlete). Even though my language is not proficient, they would understand me and liked to listen. This formed a very comfortable cooperation and working relationship among us. The practices gave me a critical eye on my project in terms of how to integrate CSP into the traditional mental skill training, where the athletes always expect the certain and scientific answers of their problems. In my opinion, cultural and contextual understandings are important and stand as a high-level capacity, but under this, sport psychology practitioners also should equip basic consulting skills and an ample knowledge base to explain the sport-related phenomena, probably not to give them answers, but to illuminate clients' and athletes' thinking.

In reflection, I kept getting frustrated during the research process. I have experienced depression and identity diffusion. This suffering could have been attributed to various reasons. However, these experiences enabled me to better understand the topic of identity. I thought I had a strong and mature identity before arriving in Canada because I knew what kind of person I was and where I wanted to go. However, when I entered into the Ph.D. program, being a young woman with Ph.D. degree, I feel a lot of pressure

both from school and social comparisons. The experience of losing my identity is just like off-track, with feeling extreme insecurity in the environment, suspecting the meaning of every action in life, losing motivation to do work and not knowing how to respond to people when they talk to me. It's like falling into nothingness status in my mind (i.e., a demeaned value). From my own experience, now I got to know identity is not a stable existence, it is in flux, fragmented and sometimes vulnerable in different life stages. I think that my current experiences could build a connection with athletes, because pursuing success in academics is a very similar process with pursuing success in sport. This experience deepens my understanding of my research topic as I start realizing how it is important for athletes to hold a strong identity and how the environment would influence people's conceptions of their identities. Now I am more curious about how the identity categories bring the social pressures or social privilege of people and how the identity fluidity could change people's motivations and their career satisfactions.

The situation didn't turn into good as time flew. The reasons of it are probably because first, I was too involved with the negative life events and sufferings of my players, thus I could not separate my world with their narratives. Second, the new knowledge and the circumstance outside of sport spurred my subordinate feelings about myself, which meant I could not form a new identity to adjust to my life. Take an example of the first reason; one of my research participants talked about how she connected to the sport at the beginning, then flourished in the sport, and then encountered a downhill slide. This story just resonated with me too much. In trying to figure out how her identity changed, I cannot help but to connect her narrative to my identity, without dealing with my reality. For the second reason, I felt I was pretty privileged before in

China, even though my parents are just working-class. I was proud of a lot of things in my world, my friends, my personality, my little accomplishments, my relationship with my parents, and I was confident with my future. However, all of them were meaningless to my life in Canada. In understanding identity, narratives, and power, I focused on my consciousness rather than facing my reality, which caused the depression to last that long, and made me want to quit this area for a time. These experiences made me think, as a sport psychology consultant, we need to put our own mental and physical health as a priority. We need to keep doing reflexivity to make sure of who we are before we help others.

3.3.2 My discomfort zones. I have studied psychology for nine years. I have done both of my undergraduate and master's degree in a post-positivist epistemology approach. The social constructionist epistemology and creative nonfiction methodology seemed to grate against my engrained ways of thinking about doing research. As noted in the literature, reflexivity goes against traditional "scientific" training and post-positivist ideals regarding how research should be conducted and reported (Butryn, 2010; Sparkes, 2002). Through my experiences and training in cultural research, I have been able to move away from many of these conventional ideals around research. I still have a Westernized orientation, wherein I place value on objective evidences of statements, and on tidy, linear processes that can be easily articulated and made sense of in my writing. The most disconcerting issue for me with regard to the reflexive process was that it was not at all linear or tidy; it was open-ended and messy, and I realized I did not like that. That is not how I am comfortable doing research, and thus, the reflexive process required me to step outside of my academic comfort zone. I am always confused about how to

push my thinking and recognize my subjectivities from inside my own head and how my subjective interpretations contribute to the field or to other scholars.

Another challenge for me is to integrate the sociological framework into psychological study. As sociology focus on the holistic society, where sociological researchers investigate social structures and social identities to understand group behaviour and to promote social justice. While psychology focus on individual's mental process, where the ultimate goals are to understand individual behaviour and to facilitate personal wellbeing. Sociology attend to how society function individuals, while psychology focus on how individual function in society. Sociology and psychology adopt the opposite lenses to view the phenomena between human and societies. For example, the athletes' struggles of their social identities could be attributed to the coping or cognition maladaptation in psychology, while in sociology, it was seen caused by the unequal social structure. Thus, it is frustrated to consistently shift between the opposite lens and to compromise both views.

Last discomfort zone for me is the language barrier. I come from a different social system and my first language is Chinese. That makes fully catching the participants' feelings a little difficult for me . In the practice work, being unfamiliar with the western social norms and manners could interfere with the flow of conversations, and sometimes raise some discomfort with participants. In a Chinese community, I know how to communicate or joke to create trust and a favourable communicating atmosphere, yet in outside of it, I have been taken away from my communicating powers due to language deficiency. Furthermore, it is hard for me to catch or identify the connotative meanings of participants' speeches.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Arts-based methods. Art-based research can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies (McNiff, 2008). Forms of art include drawings, music, dance, film, plastic arts, photography, drama, poetry, narrative writing and so forth. Emerging from the qualitative paradigm, arts-based research grew out of the practice of creative arts therapy taking place in the fields of psychiatry and psychology. Creative arts therapist Shawn McNiff (2008) stated, "creative arts therapies...promoted themselves as ways of expressing what cannot be conveyed in conventional language" (p. 11). Arts-based methods challenge the dominant, entrenched academic community and the scientific ways of knowing, while shaping a new vision of research by bringing arts and social inquiry to the realm of local, personal, everyday places and events (Finley, 2008). Art-based researchers make use of emotive, affective experiences, senses, bodies, imagination and emotion as well as intellect. They are ways of knowing and responding to the world. The whole art-based research involves processes of discovery and invention.

As the arts-based methods break the restriction of linguistic or mathematic expressing forms, they could be adopted with illiteracy, children, the disabled, or people who are less educated or lack the skills and interests for traditional ways to express themselves (Coholic, 2011). Moreover, this approach facilitates a more inclusive way of sharing knowledge and understanding lived experiences from a holistic perspective, challenging the reductionist preferences of traditional research. Blodgett (2015) engaged

the arts-based method to investigate aboriginal athletes' relocation experience, where she found this method could deeply resonate with aboriginal community members and decolonizing knowledge by centralizing indigenous ways of knowing (Finley, 2008). Thus, arts-based methods conform to a more participant directed process within the data collection, leading to richer data, as the informal, creative process helped alleviate much of the tension and apprehension that participants felt coming into the research context (see Bagnoli, 2009) and facilitated a less hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the participant (see Blodgett et al., 2013; Spaniol, 2005). That ultimately opened up deeper personal insights and expended perspectives from the participants.

Arts-based methods facilitate participants to explore themselves without judgement. Coholic (2011) explored using arts-based methods to cultivate mindfulness of children and youth who are involved with child protection or mental health system, and proved this creative approach could help them with emotional regulation, social and coping skills, and can improve their self-awareness, self-esteem and resilience. Moreover, arts-base methods help present people's identities better than cognitive methods, because identity is constructed as malleable, fragmented, and full of contradiction. People understand themselves through the stories they tell and the stories they feel part of (Freeman, 2006). These methods support participants in sharing stories holistically, in ways that may reveal the complexity, fluidity, and cultural situatedness of their identities (Blodgett et al., 2013; Douglas, 2014; McGannon & Smith, 2015). During the art process, participants focus on themselves more as they need to be fully self-aware to discover themselves and to create the artwork. We could invite participants to interpret deeper meanings of their selves and identities by their artwork. Therefore, rather than depending

on cognitive methods of sharing (responding to general conversational interview questions), arts-based methods were used to further engage the participants in deeper self-identity reflection and to help them communicate their stories more fully and creatively.

In the current project, Participants were asked to draw a picture on a blank piece of paper and, within that form, create an image that reflected who they are as boxers on the National Team. They were asked to consider the different components of themselves they are comfortable or uncomfortable with sharing in their sport context. The mandala drawing (circle drawing) was encouraged because it is widely used as a visual symbol of the psyche and wholeness. Jung (1973) suggested that the act of drawing mandalas facilitated psychological healing and personal meaning in life. He proposed that the creative process helped individuals to visualize and make sense of complex experiences and emotions, while the circular form helped to promote psychic integration and a sense of inner harmony and wholeness. Today, mandalas are used in a variety of ways, including helping people heal from trauma (Henderson et al., 2007), facilitating self-expression (Elkis-Abuhoff et al., 2009), and reducing anxiety (van der Venet & Serice, 2012). Mandalas were adopted by the boxers to present themselves as a whole. First, it is simple to accommodate rich elements. The boxers were encouraged to use different colors, shapes, lines, numbers, and motifs to represent themselves within the circle, not to over-think the process and to let their instincts guide them. Second, Mandalas represent holistic meaning. As some boxers mentioned the incomplete feeling about themselves (in a personal conversation with a former female boxer), mandala could facilitate the boxers to express their oppressed or marginalized identities (Blodgett, Ge, Schinke, &

McGannon, 2017). As the trust relationship has been built by my supervisor with the participants, the drawing processes went smooth. Athletes drew and explicit their life stories without obvious resistance or anxiety. There were boxers who drew other forms of art to reflect their understandings of the topic, such as the boxing ring. Seven arts work were collected for final analysis, as the coordination with the Francophone interviewer was problematic. After she sent our coordinator the audios of interviews and two drawings, she was lost without informing us where the other three drawings of the Francophone athletes. All of these drawings were used to relieve the tensions for the boxers participating in the research, provoking athletes to reflect on themselves and facilitating the storytelling in the next stage – the conversational interview.

3.4.2 Conversational interviews. Once visualized, the mandala drawings were used to facilitate conversational interviews with the participants. Due to my language deficiency, two female senior interviewers, one was Anglophone and one was Francophone, helped me with the interview session. Given that the participants were geographically dispersed across the country, the interviews were conducted over Skype. This computer-mediated interviewing approach has previously been used in CSP research (Schinke, Blodgett, McGannon, & Ge, 2016). The interview process began with an arts-based method in order to elicit rich storytelling from the participants and allow them to present their various identities from an emic perspective. The interviewer began with the open-ended question “Can you tell me about what you have drawn in your mandala, in terms of who you are as an athlete?” All pursuant questions were posed during the interviews in relation to the themes and identities brought forward by the participants through their drawings. Each interview lasted 60 to 90 minutes, while the participants

were encouraged to share stories about how they revealed and/or concealed different aspects of themselves during their training and competition, and how this connects to their performance and well-being as National Team boxers. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were emailed to each participant for review and refinement, before being finalized and moved into data analysis.

Conversational interviews are characterized by an unstructured form and interactive nature that allows the participants to exert greater control over the direction of the conversation (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Conrad and Schober (2000) found that, compared to the standardized interview, the conversational interview could improve respondents' comprehension of the intended meaning of research topic, and yielded more accurate responses and more disclosure to questions about personal behaviour as well as fictional scenarios. The conversational interview is an interactive process, which constitutes a complex and fraught context for personal accounts (van Enk, 2009). "How" the relationship between interviewer and interviewee would shape the "what" that gets produced. van Enk (2009) summarized the issues in a conversational interview confronting the interviewer-interviewee relationships including: first, the questions that arise over the representation of others' voices; second, the ethical responsibilities and emotional connections that even "merely" discursive involvement in interviewees' lives introduces; and third, the effects of power imbalances between interviewers and their interviewees, which are amplified by differences of class, race, gender, sexuality, and/or age. In the current project, the Anglophone interviewer was a 30 years old young female scholar, who was also a member of the research team of the whole project. She had rich interview experience with immigrant athletes and aboriginal athletes. As a member of the

research team of the whole project, she had a well-informed knowledge of the project. In the Anglophone part of the interview, the multiple aspects of athletes' lives were intentionally brought up and various identities come forth based on the participants' drawings. While the Francophone interviewer was an associate professor in Human Kinetics, whose profession is in sport psychology and the sociology of sport. She was a French hockey player, which brought more resonances with the interviewees when talking with immigrant athletes and their sport stories. However, due to lack deep understanding of the project, the interviews from the Francophone interviewer are more focused on the sport-related identities and stories, such as Olympic and non-Olympic, the relations of athletes and administrations, which led to a systematic deviation between Anglophone's and Francophone's interviews in terms of the different highlights of the content. In analysis, the interviews of these two language were included, which all presented meanings to stories in and out of sport.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Inductive thematic analysis. Following Braun, Clarke, and Weate's (2016) guidelines, an inductive thematic analysis was performed on the participants' interview transcripts to identify core narrative themes related to intersecting identities. Two members of the research team and I engaged in this process collaboratively. First, the team members engaged in indwelling, which means immersing themselves in the transcripts to become familiar with the content and generate initial ideas regarding the data (Smith, Bundon, & Best, 2016). Second, the team members inserted preliminary keywords around quotations within each interview transcript to start uncovering the athletes' various identities and related experiences. Third, the research team members

developed broader-ranging patterns of meaning, organizing the initial keywords into more-defined themes and subthemes that were connected to intersecting identity meanings. For example, themes about race, ethnicity, language, and religion naturally connected together (Adair & Rowe, 2010), while themes about gender, sexuality, physicality, and athlete identity coalesced as another set of intersectional relations. This step consisted of finding relationships among stories, while also comparing different experiences and identities. Fourth, the research team members met in person to review and refine the themes and identity meanings, ensuring that they fit together and the story regarding what was significant to the athletes' intersectional experiences. Fifth, the narratives that provided rich, contextualized insight into each theme and sub-theme were flagged as a foundation for constructing the participants' stories into creative nonfiction (Schinke, Blodgett et al., 2016; Smith, Bundon, & Best, 2016).

There are two approaches to conduct thematic analysis, the realist/quantitative approach and the interpretive/qualitative approach. The former approach focuses on the semantic meanings of the data, while the later one dives into latent level that related to social and cultural constructions. Braun and Clarke (2016) criticized that the many thematic analysis researches cited two different approaches without relaying how these two approaches were combined. Here, in the current project, I also used the two approaches to organize the data to answer the research questions. In the coding phase, the two co-researchers and I focused on the semantic meanings of the transcripts. While generating the themes, the codes were interpreted into more inclusive conceptions and relating back to the research questions and goals. For example, one story about a male coach making a comment that women should not come to this sport was first coded as

‘female was degraded in boxing’. Summarizing this code with others that describe similar situations, the related theme was generated as “boxing is a masculine sport”. Then, in relation to the research topic of intersectionality, and to present the dynamic social relations of athletes’ identities, the higher-level theme was derived as “negotiating the femininity in the masculine context”. These themes, then, reached a cultural level analysis of the meanings and implications pertaining to the significant identities that emerge from the participants’ stories, as how the patriarchal ideologies of dominant and being were challenged in the boxing context.

The quality of thematic analysis is an ongoing discussion, the researchers advocate for a rigorous, deliberative, and reflexive process of doing thematic analysis (e.g. Braun & Clarke, 2016; Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013; Sparkes & Smith, 2009). Braun and Clarke (2016) developed a checklist to assess the thematic analysis research, within which they highlighted the analysis “go beyond the obvious, and capture the messy, contradictory, and complex nature of psychological and social meanings” (p. 203). I abstracted a three-level thematic map to delineate the fluid meanings of identities, and how they intersect with each other, shaping athletes as who they are.

3.5.2 Creative nonfiction inquiry- Composite vignette. Creative nonfiction is a type of creative analytic practice (CAP, Richardson, 2000, p. 930) that tells a story which is grounded in research data and draws on literary conventions (Smith, McGannon & Williams, 2015). Rather than *tell* the realities in the scientific form of theories, creative nonfiction *shows* the story of facts, using many of the techniques of fiction for its compelling qualities and emotional vibrancy (Smith, et al., 2015). Creative nonfiction contradicts with the conventional academic research standards as it diminishes the

reliability, validity, and objectivity and tolerates ambiguity, imagination, or creativity, and subjectivity of any sort (Barone, 2008). Creative nonfiction grew out of what was then called in the 1960s and 1970s “the new journalism” (Barone, 2008, p.106) and was identified as suitable for social science and humanities as it could represent reality with portraiture, landscape, and dynamic senses of temporal and spatial flow (Baron, 2008). Smith et al. (2015) articulated that the benefits of creative nonfiction include: 1) analysing in the process of writing; 2) generating a rich smorgasbord of understandings and possible ways of being instead of theoretically finalising human lives; 3) protecting the participants’ identity without stripping away the rawness of real happenings; 4) allowing the readers to viscerally and emotionally inhabit the life worlds of participants and researchers; 5) being a useful medium for bearing witness in that story; 6) offering a deeply embodied, sensorial and relational account of human lives; and 7) being able to reach multiple audiences instead of only academics. However, the most critical benefit could be “not being boring” as creative nonfiction captures or describes a subject (Caulley, 2008, p.427).

Creative nonfiction was engaged in the present project because it aligns with the social constructionist and intersectional theories of self-identity underpinning this project and lends to holistic thinking (Carless & Douglas, 2016; McGannon & Smith, 2015). Creative nonfiction inquiry could show the fluidity and complexity of humans, which enabled us to convey intersecting identities and stories of our participants with portraiture, landscape, a dynamic sense of temporal and spatial flow, and emotional vibrancy. Our creative nonfiction took the form of composite vignettes. Composite vignette is a type of creative nonfiction inquiry, whereby the experiences and voices of

multiple people are amalgamated into a single, synthesized narrative (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Spalding & Phillips, 2007). Rather than presenting individual stories, where particular sets of themes were emphasized and others de-emphasized, a composite approach enables the authors to draw together the insightful elements of all the participants' stories and weave them into a more powerful, all-encompassing shared account. To construct the vignette, the thematic map was first presented as a narrative skeleton, providing a general order and structure for the composite content. Then a co-researcher and I reviewed the data under each theme and sub-theme, extracting key words, quotes, and stories that best represented each theme. These data extracts were engaged as the content for each theme, similar to the strategy employed by Smith (2013).

Being situated in different positions of social hierarchies, people construct their social realities differently. Thus, as different facets of people's identities move in and out of the forefront of their lives in different moments and spaces (as with a turn of a kaleidoscope lens), the way they see the world and make sense of their experiences dynamically changes. Drawing on the aformationed kaleidoscope imagery that Eastaale (2003) used to conceptualize intersectionality, the vignettes were developed to showcase the ways in which the nuanced stories people developed pertaining to different identities. There are more than one athletes' voices were presented in each vignette to represent certain identity group of athletes' stories. We absorbed the moments when particular identities or powerful stories took precedence in the boxing context, while simultaneously intersecting and overlapping with other shifting identities. The focus was on showing how these different identity meanings act on one another to produce intersectional experiences of marginalization and dis/advantages that affect sport performance and well-

being. The strengths of composite vignette include it accommodate multiple voices and contextual information into one single narrative, which manifested the interactive constructing process between researchers and data set. Also, through the vignettes, the various aspects of the stories are delineated and contextualized in an aesthetic way, where permit the various understandings of audience. The weakness of composite vignette is that it mixes the social and historical information of individual participants and their stories, which cause incoherence for readers to understand the whole context.

Furthermore, as the athletes with different identities are situated in different world, the composites neither represent the voices of every athletes nor the entire particular group of athletes. They are the joint stories that expressed by athletes in similar situation.

In writing the vignettes, different perspectives for each identity meaning reflect different glimpses through the kaleidoscope. The writing process for each vignette was iterative and dialogical, with the authors moving back and forth between the narrating participant's interview transcript, the thematic analysis, and the unfolding storyline of the vignette (Smith, 2013). Direct quotes from the participants were maintained in the vignettes as much as possible in an effort to convey their individual voices and meanings. However, the authors modified and combined some narrative details to protect the participants' anonymity, as suggested by Smith. Creative writing was also employed to enhance the flow, "feel" and aesthetic of the stories (Smith, McGannon, & Williams, 2016).

Creative nonfiction writing aims to seek truthfulness rather than the truth, where the stories are created to demonstrate how true an experience of a narrative can be (Smith, et al., 2015). The vignettes revealed the influx of identities, how they changed,

diffused and intersected with each other. The retellings thus show scenes of female boxers operating under multiple identities in and out of Canadian Female National Boxing Team, generating more contextual and authentic understanding among readers.

Authenticity

How to judge the quality of qualitative studies is an ongoing discussion among researchers (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Sparke and Smith (2009) proposed two claims of judgment: one is criteriology and the other is relativism. To ensure the trustworthiness, the first one claims to develop the criteria that parallels with quantitative studies, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; while the second one objects to the predetermining criteria and claims that there are multiple realities to justify, thus researches can only illuminate the audience of their own interpretations of the social phenomena. The current project was framed within a relativist ontological position. Following from Sparkes and Smith (2009), the ontological standpoint adopted within the current project reveals a move away from criteriology, and toward flexible suggestions, or possible considerations of locally specific aspects of the project upon which to judge its quality (Sparkes & Douglas, 2007). The aspects of this research are considered in relation to this project included the aesthetics of the project, reflexivity, whether the vignettes clarify the topic of intersectionality within athletes' social identities, showing how people with various identities constructed the world differently, and the actions and impacts that stimulated by the study. The aesthetics of the project include the methods and language of the writings (Richardson, 2000; Sparkes & Douglas, 2007). In the current studies, the arts-based method and creative nonfiction inquiry were utilized to explore and present the topic of intersectionality, they are rich, playable,

humane, vivid, and being easier to resonate with the audience who are athletes, coaches, and administrators. The vignettes were developed to disclose the fluidities of the athletes' identities, presenting the changing meanings of identities within a story, in place of previous more static misrepresentations as embedded categories. During the data analysis process, the vignettes were presented to the local boxing club I worked in successively once being done, to get some feedbacks from the boxers, as they were situated in the same larger sport context. Except of expressing the inspiration they get from the National Team female boxers' life stories, most boxers of the club articulated they like the stories and some of them sounds like their own stories.

As being centered in the research, the researcher's (mine) reflexivity also augments the authenticity of this research. My personal embodied experiences of acculturation and identity privilege and oppression interact with athletes' accounts led to emotional vibrancy. Following from Sparkes and Smith (2009), the question we raised was whether the vignettes permitted multiple understandings of intersectionality? Within the vignettes, one would find the multiple identities construct an interlocking power system that positioned athletes in relative privilege and oppression status, wherein identities come cross with each other in different ways. Some emphasized the intragroup differences, such as straight female boxers vs. queer athletes (who are not conform to gender and sexuality norms); some highlighted the double marginalized status, such as black female athlete; some presented the compensate and associative meanings in power, such as Olympic weight category and socioeconomic status. Moreover, there is another question of whether the vignette approach served to provoke thought in the reader regarding the complexities of intersectionality? We believe that drawing upon a vignette,

as opposed to the certain forms of themes and quotes in thematic and content analyses, opened up the athlete's uncertainties and self-questioning in terms of who they are and how they related to others. In addition, the vignettes were chosen to delineate that identities are constructed not only within the boxing context, but also influenced by the broader social context, with coaches and peers, in a much larger sport system.

In March, 2017, when the National Championship was holding, I had an oral report to the head coaches of Boxing Canada in Quebec city. The team dynamics based on language and weight categories, and the identity marginalization issues were presented, which raise the coaches' and administrators' attention of how to integrate diverse athletes and promote social justice on the National Team. The presentation was highly valued by the audiences. According to the results of this project, Boxing Canada implemented three specific changes include treating Olympic and non-Olympic athletes equally in onsite service; normalizing different sexualities on the team, and working with athletes in their languages. As a result, the performances of National Team athletes in the international competitions increased significantly in the following years.

3.6 Forthcoming Structure of the Results

To demonstrate the complexity of athletes and illuminate audience to view athletes as a whole, in the opening, I collected five artworks of the participants to show the multifaceted aspects of individual athlete. Brief synopses and implications of these artworks were presented (Chapter Four). In the following, based on the stories and experiences athletes shared, nine social identities were identified as meaningful to the various inequality issues in the sport context. Three dominant ideologies- patriarchy, Whiteness-centered, and pragmatism- that nourished the hierarchical power relations and

inequalities were discussed. To present the results in a clear and structured way, I grouped these identities according to their significances with the three types of social inequality in sport. They are gender- sexuality- physicality (Chapter Five), race and ethnicity-language-religion (Chapter Six), and socioeconomic status-weight categories-athletic level (Chapter Seven). Each of these groups of identities represented a set of intersecting identities that are to be explored (see Figure 3). To be specific, in Chapter four, I reveal the nuances of heterosexual female boxers' and queer female boxers' stories in fitting to the male-dominant sport subculture, and how they constructed the various types of physicality to adjust and contest the patriarchal ideologies. In Chapter five, I delineated how the ethnicity, language, and religion created multiple divisions and exclusions on the team, including how ethnic minority athletes were differentiated from the white dominant context through language practices and being included through religion. In Chapter Six, I illustrated how the socioeconomic status, weight categories, athletic levels iteratively impacted athletes' status on the team, and shaped their sport career development, where the institutional pragmatism was targeted.

Within each chapter, according to the stories athletes shared around their multiple social identities, two or three composite vignettes were presented to demonstrate the fluidity and contextual meanings of these intersecting identities in sport. Due to the athletes with different identity intersections, each of them was exposed to different social realities within the same context. The vignettes also delineated the commonality and different stories that athletes shared about on the National Team as well as in the larger sport system and boxing context. Through analyzing the multiple inclusion and exclusion experiences of athletes within each identity intersection set, the power relations

embedded in these identities were uncovered with corresponding problematic cultural discourses- patriarchy, whiteness, and pragmatism were discussed. With the aim of promoting the inclusive sport context, in the end of the discussion of each chapter, the implications and interventions were presented to increase the practical contributions of this research.

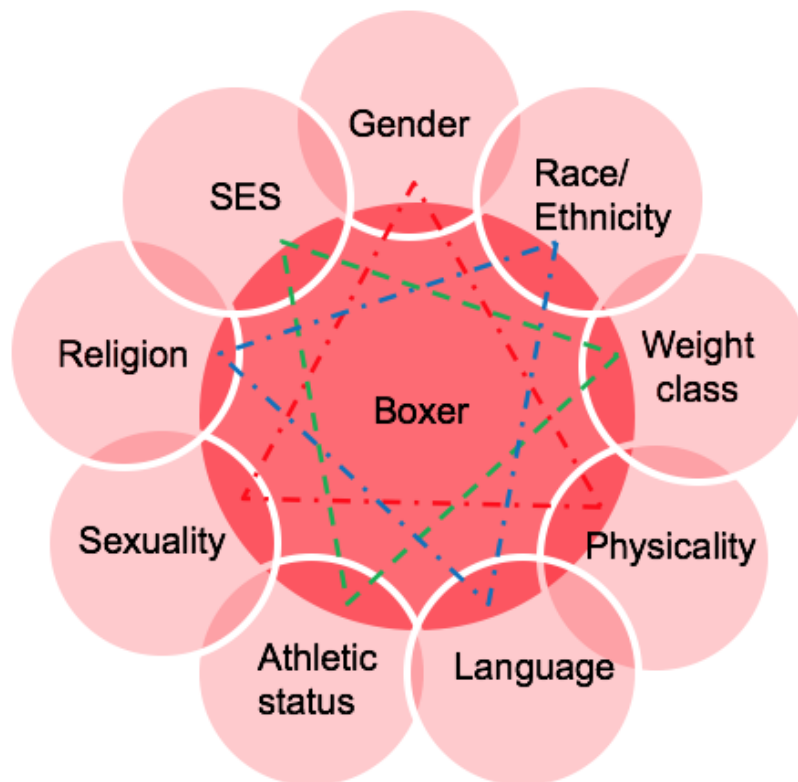


Figure 3 The intersecting social identities that are salient on the Canadian National Boxing Team and intersect.

Chapter Four

In this chapter, five of the ten artworks were chosen to visualize athletes as who they are on the National Boxing Team. Presenting part of the result of artworks rather than whole because first of all, I only collected seven artworks in total (this was explained in the chapter three, p.87); secondly, the other two artworks were too blur to identify the figures and words in them; thirdly, as the aim of this chapter is to show the holisticality of the athletes and the multiplicity of their identities, the five artworks would be enough to provide evidences and justify this argument, without abundance.

After being asked to draw how they see themselves as boxers on the National Team, the female boxers used words, symbols, shapes, and figures to represent the multiple aspects of what they think they are, and what they can/cannot share on the National Team. To avoid over-interpreting, some athletes' quotes are cited directly from transcripts, with the aim to show the meanings of their drawings and the intersectionality of their identities. What should be noticed is that, being different from the stories athletes narrated in the following interviews, the athletes' drawings reflected the wholeness of them and were specific to the Canadian National Boxing Team context. Thus, I located the discussion below, revealing vivid portraits of how the athletes are complex, diverse, multifaceted, and how they negotiate and navigate themselves under a certain power system.

4.1 Artworks and Meanings

4.1.1 The artwork of MS and its meaning. The boxer drew three identities that she thought were significant to her in the circle. On the left top, there is a same sex couple, which represents her homosexual identity. In the center, an eagle feather and a

medicine wheel with the word “Anshinaabe” to symbolize her aboriginal identity. At the bottom of the circle, the upper-case word “SPONSORSHIP,” highlighting another important aspect of her that she gained during her sport career- a sponsored athlete. This identity brought overwhelming stress for her and made her uncomfortable as she tried to fit into the boxing environment. These identities intersected with each other and shaped her way of being with boxing. As she explained:

It’s not just because I identify as a Native boxer, but I identify as a Native woman in my everyday life. So, it’s important to bring that into boxing. You know, I identify as a lesbian Native woman. And if I can’t bring that into boxing I think that would cause discomfort for me. So, it’s not necessarily that it has anything to do with boxing, but just how I identify outside of boxing and being able to bring that into it... I feel like the more boxing is a reflection of me, the more comfortable I’m going to be with it anyway.

These quotes exemplify how the identities of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity intersect with each other, shaping the athlete into who she is. In negotiating these identities and their meanings to boxing, the athlete articulated the importance for boxing accept these identities of her, which means she can express the whole herself in boxing. However, on the other side, she also expressed these three identities do not necessarily have to do with being a boxer, because as a boxer, she would be more comfortable being judged by her boxer identity. This account might indicate the athlete live in separate lives, where she are endeavour to fit in her multiple identities rather than integration. The athlete was more aware of her oppressed aspect of lives, where the identities of being lesbian, native woman, and the negative experiences of sponsorship constitute the general

identity for her on the National team. This construction revealed the athlete might be trapped in the social meanings of these identities and found it uncertain or hard to achieve her authentic self.



Figure 4 MS's mandala drawing that include the elements of same-sex couple, feather, and the word SPONSORSHIP that represent herself on the National Team.

4.1.2 The artwork of MB and its meaning. There is a bunch of elements that the athlete put in her mandala to represent herself. In the middle of the circle there is a cross that represents religion, which means a lot to her in boxing in terms of strength. At the bottom part of the circle, she drew the Canada flag, Team [name], and family support, which represents her support system and also the aspects that she related to others. A heart close the support system means she is passionate about what she does. In the top right session of the circle, she put the personality characteristics strong/ confident, and leader/ role model because she thought that was the way people see her as or the images she tried to project in the community as an athlete. On the top, the word "French-ENG" means she represented both linguistic groups, but she identified herself as French more. In the top left side, she put her down weight category because she is physically small,

which is different from what people usually expected. She also put her gender because it is a big aspect to be a female in male-dominant sport for her.

The athlete's mandala is rather aesthetic in asymmetry, which properly accommodates the physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, cultural, and social aspects of self. The drawing may indicate that this athlete developed all-around, and had an adaptive status to fit her within the environment. However, the athlete only focus on the present multiple aspects of self, without visualizing her future identity, which might lead to difficulties when she transit to next stage or out of boxing.

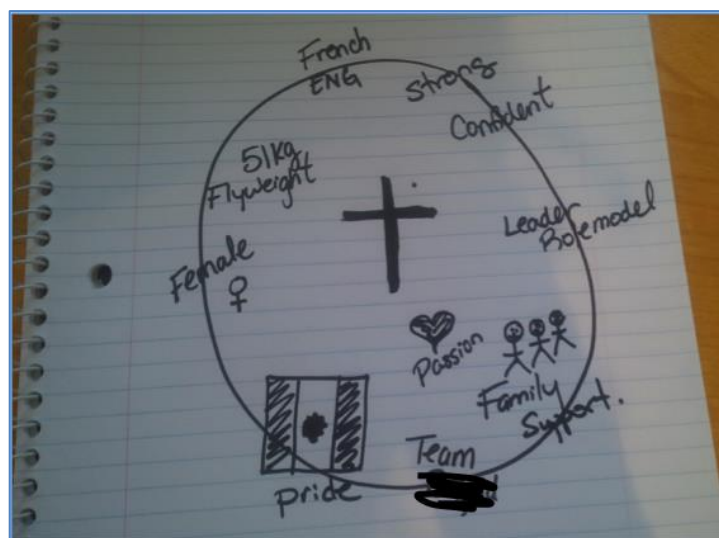


Figure 5 MB's mandala drawing that include the elements of cross, flag, heart, people, words and symbols

4.1.3 The artwork of AG and its meaning. There are two sections of AG's circle. The left side are the identities she would share on the National Team, including athletic identity (meaning work ethic, training schedule, and other things like that), financial status, sexuality, education, language, and her location within the team context. On the right part, she wrote down spiritual beliefs, gender politics (or say her gender identity and how she understands gender identities in general), and political ideas. These

words represent the identities that she wouldn't share with her teammates and coaching staff on the National Team. In the rightmost part, she wouldn't share her identity as a recovering alcoholic, which is part of her personal world. The athlete performs her identity depending on the situations, as the quote generated from her interview presented below.

I won't share my political ideas about the way the world should be or the way the world is from what I belief. And I also don't share my identity as a recovering alcoholic, which is a big part of my life and my personal world...I think just part of humility is realizing that, if you are on, imagine you are on the TV, and everyone is watching you, the only way that people can agree with you is if you are not giving a really strong opinion about politics, but also I am a political person just by standing there, I am a masculine female, who is... mean, probably to most people, it's like obviously queer. So I am already saying, making a political statement just by being here.

In AG's accounts, she constructed a multi-layered self, where she intentionally hid some while open others, which reveals the uncertainty of the athlete about herself. She holds a few identities that she was afraid to exposure, representing the sense of conflicts or exploration of being the authentic self in the current context.

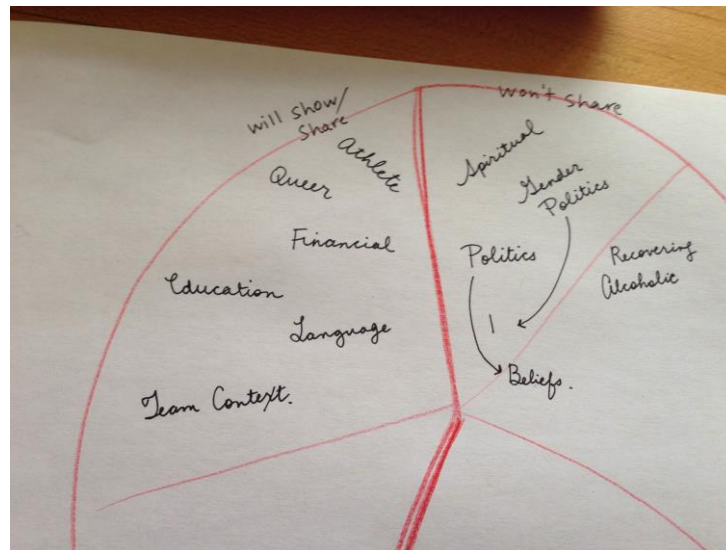


Figure 6 AG's mandala drawing that the circle was divided with multiple identity words in each.

4.1.4 The artwork of CV and its meaning. This athlete drew a boxing ring to represent one aspect of her when she was in competition. The words she wrote inside the ring and on the four corners differentiated her from others on the National Team. The words in the corners were the most important because they represented how she succeeded, which includes organized, disciplined, serious and concentrated. The words inside the ring represented how she is in general when confronted with competition and interacting with others. The “Francophone and Spanish-speaking” means she was the only one on the team who could speak to Spanish-speaking boxers from other countries. She put “humour” because she can create a more relaxed atmosphere by laughing a little. The “solitary” means she liked to be alone and to be in her own bubble, when she usually doesn’t talk too much. She also put team spirit because she liked being with the team, which helped with confidence and strength. She put “attentive” in the center, because she thought she was selfish, being very attentive to herself, yet one need to be “selfish” to be an athlete since there is a need to focus on her own things. The word “determined” means

that in the competition, she always fought to win. Determining to this objective helped her avoid distraction and anxiety. The word “prayer” means she always had to pray before and after a fight. The word ‘respect’ means she respected her opponents greatly. The athlete delineated the sport-centered self, within which the contradictory aspects were storied, such as to be with the team vs. to be alone in her own bubble; to create a relaxed atmosphere vs. to be attentive to herself and being selfish. These contradictions demonstrated the momentary fragments and fluidity of identities.

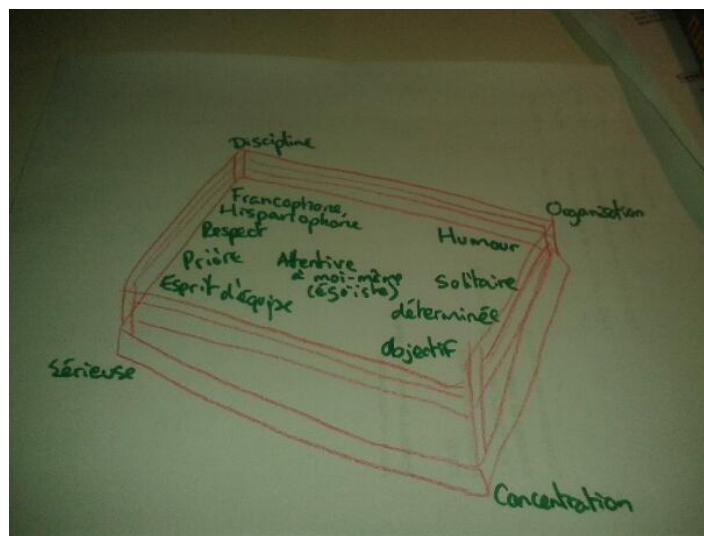


Figure 7 CV's drawing of herself that is presented with French words in a boxing ring.

4.1.5 The artwork of AF and its meaning. This athlete drew a production line to represent the National Team boxers and the sport institution. The little figures on the carpet are athletes. Each of them has a heart that symbolizes passion to the sport. Some athletes perform better than others, who were drawn green and bright. The carpet is rolling toward the institutions - Boxing Canada and AIBA (International Amateur Boxing Association). On the team, some athletes are super stars, who are the aspirations. As the athletes cannot train together as the whole National Team in most time of a year, they always get to meet each other with baggage, and they also have their small circle at

home. These were all shown in the bubbles. The institution shaped athletes as who they are, as the athlete accounted:

Every athlete, to get to the national level, every athlete has their individuality we could say, has had his process, his difficulties, his joys, all that, his own history, with his entourage... We all have different motivations, but I mostly wanted to illustrate the fact that we all come from different environments, different contexts, and we all have to shape into the mold a little. We all have to arrive in a certain structure and respect that structure. So, what we have in common with Boxing Canada is that we want gold medals. It's not bad, it's basically the main thing we have in common, not to say the only thing.

This athlete elicited how the institutional power shapes them, wherein the athletic identity might be prioritized, as the aim of the institution is gold medal. Centralizing the athletic identity of athletes would inevitably marginalize other aspects of the person, which leads to certain identities, such as physicality, young, Olympic weight category, being privileged, and further creates the hierarchy in sport.

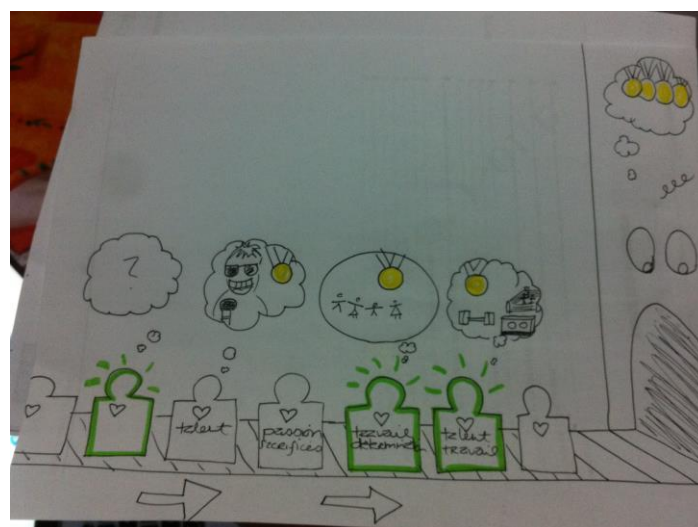


Figure 8 AF's drawing of herself that seven human figures with chatting clouds on a producing carpet.

4.2 Summary

The five artworks illustrated how athletes constructed themselves differently to situate into the Canadian National Team. The first (MS's) drawing shows the female boxer constructed herself based on couple social identities that differentiate her with others and salient in the context. The second (MB's) drawing is presented to illustrate the diverse aspects of athletes, including physical, psychological, social, and spiritual part of her. Through the third (AG's) drawing, we witness the female boxer share certain identities and hide some, which shows the fluidity and performative aspects of identities among situations. In the forth (CV's) drawing, the athlete concentrates the athletic aspect of self while ignoring others, which may lead to the imbalance development. What's more, some identities the athlete constructed are contradictory with each other. In the last example (AF's), I attempted to show how the institutional values have the power to shape athletes into who they are and constitute hierarchies within sport. These visuals illuminate the diversity of athletes and how the institutional power dynamically shape athletes as whom they are. Apart of these, the identities also continuously evolve. As athletes develop new identities, the old ones are changed. Some identities are centralized and come to forth often while others are peripheral and being silenced in certain occasions. In the next section, I will amalgamate the athletes' stories and present the depth analysis of particular identity's meanings and implications.

Chapter Five

Two composite vignettes are presented to show how the identities of gender, sexuality, and physicality intersected and constructed the diversity of athletes as who they are. The power relations embedded in these identities were revealed through the shared stories of marginalization and/or privilege pertaining to these identities in the larger system of boxing and on the Canadian National Team.¹ The first vignette was unfolded around the stories of how the female athletes found themselves fitting into the masculine boxing subculture and built a sense of belonging related to their gender, sexuality, and physicality identities. The second vignette focused on how these female athletes struggled and challenged the masculine sport context. The implications of the culturally constructed meanings of these identities to athletes' sport performance were presented, and how they empowered or constrained the athletes expressing themselves were discussed.

5.1 Result

5.1.1 Fitting into the masculine sport context.

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes for the Vignette- Fitting into the Masculine Sport Context

Themes	Subthemes
Being attracted to boxing	Boxing allowed one to express aggressiveness Being comfortable of training with guys than girls
The acceptance and tensions for queer athletes	Boxing accepted lesbians and bisexual athletes. Having the tensions of being regarded as sexual threats

¹ Although we have focused exclusively on gender, sexuality, and physicality in this chapter, we recognize that other identities related to age, language, nationality, race, ethnicity, etc. are also inextricably linked to the athletes' narratives.

Vignette one. What drew me to boxing is different from what keeps me here. What initially drew me in were the physicality and the violence of the sport, and how confident I felt in that environment. What keeps me here is the art of it and the learning – learning who I am as an athlete, how my body moves and what it is capable of. When I was young, I always wanted to set myself apart from others and be different. I remember watching a movie about a girl who did boxing. She was a tomboy and was the type of person that didn't care what others thought. That was so cool, so I told myself that I was going to do the same thing. Looking back, I think it was the confidence that really attracted me. I was always a rough girl and I wasn't afraid to fight or stand up for myself. Boxing just gave me a place to channel that energy and build that confidence, which I didn't find in other sports. Like in volleyball, the sport I played firstly, which was a very different environment. I was a setter and I used to always give the stink eye to the ball and to my opponents, and I remember how my teammates would make fun of me because it wasn't "sportsmanlike". But in boxing, my coach actually encourages me to go into the ring and talk trash to my opponents. He said hey, "if it makes you fight better to say something in the ring, or to be aggressive, go and express your personality." One of my assistant coaches used to say I got "a little gangster" in there, you know what I mean? In boxing, I am allowed to be aggressive and I don't need to hide anything, it makes me extremely comfortable within that environment, that's a huge effect on whether I am confident to develop the skills needed in this sport.

Same to my personality, probably also because I identify myself as queer athlete, plus I am more physical and masculine than the average girl, I feel much more comfortable training with guys than girls. In the boxing gym, I don't have to worry about

any judgements from comparisons, and I don't have to be careful about how I present, and where I have my real purpose and sense of who I am. In Boxing Canada, there are almost half amount female boxers are queer, so I am pretty normal and I've never feel isolated in boxing at all for a second. But when I was on the volleyball team, I was probably the only queer on the whole Canadian university team system. It's very intense to deal with the situation that people question you. As in the restrooms, even for now in some general ones, it's really awkward when you go into the restroom or you are coming out, and another woman looks at the sign and then looks at you, trying to figure out if she is in the right place or if you are in the wrong place. This created a lot of frustration for me. Even though I have a masculine physique and the way I operate is somewhere in between the binary gender categorizations, it doesn't mean I am not a woman.

I never hide my sexuality, but I think it's just something private, I am not afraid of judgement but I am not, like sit and discuss it with everybody on the team because it has nothing to do with my boxing. I do not hide, but neither shout it out. Even I talked it with my best friend on the team, we talked about couple thing, not the sexual thing, she was trying to understand what was going on but not judgement. For the last couple of years, I am pretty sure that everybody on the team knows I am a gay. The only uncomfortable moment for me in boxing is in weigh-ins or medicals, where I have a lot tension. When I go in for a weigh-in right before a fight, from an athlete point of view, I want to be really relaxed and just ease through the process. But I find that I am always on edge, being afraid that the other athletes think I am checking them out or something like that. I always have to have a book or headphones with me so that I look occupied, or I have to find a spot in the room to focus on and freeze my vision. It's really nerve-wracking, to be

honest. I don't know how other boxers experience it - maybe everyone is a little nervous - but I think it is unique to me or other queer athletes to worry about being regarded as eerie or creepy. I have to try to protect myself by being overtly engaging in something or putting up visual boundaries for myself. So, my fight actually starts during the weigh-ins; not after. I am not there to chat, to laugh, or to learn about my opponent. I am just trying to get through the weigh-in. I just want to make sure no one thinks that I am thinking anything sexual about them.

Discussion. In the first vignette, I focused on the moments and identities that fit into the masculine culture of boxing, which started with the story of a female boxer who was attracted into the sport due to the mentally and physically masculine nature of the environment. Mennesson (2000) found that women's entry into, and continued involvement, in the traditionally "man's world" of boxing depends on both the counter-feminine identity and having a natural taste for combat, or the situational factors, such as having difficulties in life. My results consisted of the findings where the female boxer indicated that she was "different" from her female peers and she was more likely to challenge the ideal feminine dispositions and being spunky. The stories were shared in both heterosexual and non-heterosexual female boxers' accounts, which demonstrates the non-conformity between gender and sexuality (meaning the girls with masculine characteristics are homosexual or the homosexual women are masculine) and, the fluidity of gender identity – girls construct and perform anti-feminine characteristics to express themselves.

Comparatively, being more aggressive and muscular than normal girls was another unique reason for the protagonist of this vignette – a queer athlete fitting into the

context. Due to the queer athlete was not conformed to either gender or sexual norms, she was teased in another sport - volleyball. Krane (2001) pointed out that for the athletes who are identified as “big girls,” “tomboy,” or masculine women, they were seen as subordinate to their ideal feminine counterparts. To avoid this negative social comparison and reduce the pressures of being nonconformity, the woman sought to the boxing environment that could accommodate the unfeminine part of herself (Krane & Barber, 2003). The masculine subculture of boxing provides such a place that could justify the ‘deviant’ women’s self-value and legitimize their expressions of gender identity. This established how the subculture of sport shapes and reinforces personal identity.

The scenarios reflected two layered meanings of women participating in sport. One emphasized coming to boxing to rebel against the social norms. Another is for the culturally subordinated women (i.e., queer or non-heterosexual women), who came to boxing seeking a form of athletic and broader holistic asylum and belonging. Through the embodied practice and masculine discourses of boxing, such as the flexible body movement, the combat skills, being tough and strong, women constructed a more powerful self. Their confidence increased and sport skills developed, both of these strengthening their commitment to the sport. However, the negative aspects for being exclusively immersed into the masculine boxing culture would lead to maladaptation to the non-sport environment and threatens the long-term development of athletes (Carless & Douglas, 2008; 2013). Especially for the socially subordinate women, when their unfeminine attributes, being aggressive and even gangster attitude was accepted and reinforced in boxing, they were more in danger of being marginalized from the larger society, and also reproducing masculine stereotypes of female boxers.

Sexuality is another important identity for athletes to construct themselves in life as well as in sport. On the National Team, from the athletes' accounts, almost half of the boxers came out as lesbian, bisexual, or queer members, which is concurrent with the trend that there is an increasing support for LGBTQ athletes to disclose their sexual identities in sport (e.g., Anderson & Bullingham, 2015). Boxing was culturally seen as a man's sport, thus being lesbian is one of the reasons why women seem to participate in this sport. Unlike other sports, boxing was demonstrated as the one that less likely has heteronormative or homophobic pressures of female non-heterosexual athletes (while gay males are probably in a completely different situation) as the sport is culturally constructed to hold a masculine nature of the sport. The homosexual female athletes even expressed that they were more comfortable training with guys than girls. In spite of the widely acceptance, there were some non-heterosexual female boxers in the research stated that they would not like to shout out of their sexuality, even though they would not hide it. Some female boxers only shared their sexuality with close teammates, and some expressed they would rather be identified simply as a boxer. The subtle contradictory attitude towards open and closed reveals the identity fluidity among situations.

Furthermore, in the binary gendered sport, there is no legal position for the untraditional gender and sexualities. A queer athlete reported the uneasiness to stay in the same change room or weigh-in with heterosexual athletes because she was afraid of causing discomfort to them. Even though the heterosexual athletes in this project did not report the uncomfortableness in such occasions. Barbour, Roberts, and Windover (2016) also proved the similar findings that non-heterosexual people are uncomfortable looking at their teammates or engaging in any positive conversations with them in the locker

room or hotel rooms when travelling to competitions, because they do not want to be criticized as they are posing a sexual threat to heterosexual athletes. On the other hand, researchers have found the members in minority groups often regard themselves as representatives of their minority communities, thus exacerbating hyper-vigilance over how they portray themselves (Withycombe, 2011). In this project, the queer athlete posed a strict moral judgement for herself to demonstrate the integrity and against the sexual stigmatization of the LGBTQ group. Even though the athlete emphasized sexuality had nothing to do with her sport performance, the tension in the weigh-in process would inevitably lead to extra depletion of their psychological energy and cause distraction before competition.

5.1.2 Challenges in the masculine sport context.

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes of Negotiating the Femininity in the Masculine Sport Context

Themes	Subthemes
Boxing is a masculine sport	Female is degraded in boxing Female boxers need to work much harder than men to get the same respect
Fighting against the stereotypes in and out of the sport	Dressing practically to avoid being sexualized Showing femininity to contest the stereotypes

Vignette two. It is hard for women to get the same respect or recognition as men in boxing. I think a lot of the guys think that the girls are there for fitness, to tone up. I am sure some of the guys think the girls are just there to pick up guys. When a new girl walks into the gym for the first time, you can tell that they're thinking 'Oh, she's cute, she is trying to box', rather than 'Hey, she wants to fight, and she is serious about that'. A

few years ago, after a competition, one of the coaches on the women's team actually said to us, "You know, I never wanted my girlfriend to box because it's a men's thing." That really shocked me, because he trained us and I put my whole heart in the ring for him. I've also heard people say 'you're a female so it's easier for you' a lot of times. That was heartbreaking, that's just like people dismiss all of your efforts and judge you only by gender.

Actually, males need to work hard to earn respect, also. But it is just not easy for girls to get on a high-level training. In the gym and even on the National Team, we don't have many girls sparring partner. I have a lot of good guy sparring partners, but a guy will never be a girl as those techniques are not the same. When we go into a gym, it's almost like we have to push harder, train harder, and be better than what an average guy to get the same respect. Since I was a young teenager in boxing, I have been telling myself I have to prove that we can do what the men do – and be better! That drive has intensified since I made it onto the National Team. Now that I am a veteran on the team I really feel the need to perform well to help my team build energy we need and feed off of that. It feels like it's my responsibility to be a leader and show the other women that we can perform the way like men do. Now, the culture is changing, as more and more girls come to boxing, level of women's boxing is catching up and female boxing is gaining more recognition. A lot of coaches say that they like to work with women, because of work ethic; they see there is no ego. If the coach tells girls something they are going to do it without questioning. It's actually funny because some of the guys from the men's boxing team have started coming to us to ask questions and learn from us. You can tell that they are there listening and watching us in the gym because we are performing well.

It's really cool to see that they are looking at us as an example, even for the smallest thing. Because so often people are underestimating us.

A lot of people also expect female boxers to all be bigger, very muscular, and butchy looking – having a black eye or broken nose, etc. That's not a pretty picture and it's an old stereotype that's just not true. One of my teammates, her big thing is wearing tights and earrings while she is training just to make sure that people don't think she is a lesbian or doesn't look like a guy. Actually, most of the National Team women are really feminine. When we travel around for competitions people actually say "Wow, Canada has the most beautiful athletes!" We make an effort to show that. Even when we do interviews, the girls always try to do their makeup, make sure their hair is nice, make sure they're looking good. In the gym, I always careful about what we wear, because I don't want to dress like a guy wearing really baggy shorts, I want to keep feminine, but I don't wear short shorts, because as the only girl training with fifty guys, sometimes it can feel like guys are checking you out, and the girls are also going to giggle about that. I have my own style. Practically, I wear tights and then put shorts over them. I think we are doing a really good job in portraying that we are feminine, beautiful, and still can fight. For me, I have a small body structure, even if I do 30000 push-ups every day, I would still looked feminine. But for girls in heavier weight classes, it is especially hard for them to keep feminine look. Some of the girls do consciously avoid getting too muscular. When they do some exercises and they are getting bigger and bigger, they have to say to the coach "I don't want to have big arms like a man". It is all about balance between the combative nature of sport and being a woman. In women's boxing, obviously, you have to be tough and you have to be able to take punches, and you have to have qualities that

make you a good boxer, whether you are masculine doesn't really matter. It's not only the muscle that shows you are sharp, but also the mental and technical parts. People assume that being a lesbian is the reason why women are in this sport, so female boxers coming out as lesbians won't surprise anybody. On the team, if two girls are very close, even though they are only friends there would be rumors saying that they must be gay. As a heterosexual, I was always fight the stereotype, but now, as more and more girls came out as gay in the last two years, it is hard to fight. I did consciously bring my boyfriend around so that people know that I am straight. They do whatever they want, but that's obviously not my identity.

Discussion. In the second vignette, we focus on how the cultural constructions of gender put female boxers at a disadvantage in the male-dominant sport, and how the female boxers negotiate their identity with the masculine values. Contradictory with the stories shared in the first vignette, which focused on the positive emancipation and acceptance of the female boxers' authentic selves, boxing in the second vignette highlighted the challenges of being a female in male-dominant sport. Boxing reinforced the cultural image of women are less competitive and physically weak, because their performance and physicality looks less intense than men's (Kim, 2012). In this project, participants stated that when women initially enter a boxing gym, male members and coaches typically assume they are there for fitness or, worse, to simply "pick up guys." The participants discussed an underlying (patriarchal) assumption that females are not serious about fighting, and thus, are not readily acknowledged as legitimate athletes in this context. In the vignette, the female boxer was shocked to hear her coach state that he would never want his girlfriend getting into boxing because it is a violent man's sport.

This single comment demoralized the female boxer in that moment and completely undermined everything she had worked for with the coach. This situation is made even worse when you consider that she had been working with this coach for years and believed him to be a core supporter of not only her, as an individual athlete, but of women's boxing in general. In such degrading circumstances, earning respect and recognition play a pivotal motivation for female boxers to prove themselves on the National Team, where the female boxers strive to compete against males' privilege by demonstrating their athleticism and work ethics, and underlining the technical mastery rather than the physical strength (Mennesson, 2000). To gain even the smallest degree of respect, the female boxers have to work much harder than their male counterparts. They set themselves up as inspiring role models for the young girls to fight for their own talents. Through their efforts, the exclusive masculine subculture of boxing is changing towards a more open environment to females. The female boxers even noticed that men and coaches are starting to favour the strength of women.

In the first vignette, the female boxers highlighted the opposed feminine traits of themselves, both in mental and physical aspects, to justify their participation to the masculine sport- boxing. Meanwhile in the second vignette, the female boxers expressed their intention to perform the patriarchal feminine traits to gain social privilege. The female boxers narrated that they were consciously careful about keeping their feminine look, and for some heterosexual boxers, they even emphasize their femininity to avoid being labelled as lesbian. Researchers have documented that female athletes negotiate and reconcile between the traditions of femininity and athleticism, which bring identity conflicts and pressure to meet the contradictory expectations (Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar

& Kauer, 2004). In this project, the female boxers negotiated their identities between masculinity and femininity. They strategically performed their identity as needed in their contexts. To be accepted in the sport, as well as to avoid being sexualized or degraded by male coaches and counterparts, they were dressing practically instead of feminine. To gain privilege in society or even in competitions as female, they catered to the patriarchal values – being beautiful, thin, and not muscular, and cut down the volume of trainings to keep their feminine body shape. This reflected the athletes' identity fluidity in different contexts, and served to be consistent with the traditional feminist perspective that female boxers challenge norms while also displaying traditional modes of femininity through sexualizing their appearance to meet the social standards (e.g., Mennesson, 2000).

Kavoura, Ryba, and Chroni (2015) explored the experience of Greek female jodoka athletes in negotiating their gender identity, where they found the experienced or older athletes are less careful about their feminine appearance and endorse their athletic body more. In the current study, we found a trivial difference that the female boxers, heterosexual and some homosexual, consistently expressed their concern about their looks. To reconcile the conflicts, these female boxers in the present study endeavoured to portray an athletic image of femininity as “you can be beautiful and you can fight” to balance their masculine practices, to push against the indecent cultural stereotypes of female boxers (i.e., butchy, lesbians and/or deviants), and to gain social advantage in and out of the sport.

5.2 General Discussion

The two vignettes together showed how the identities of gender, sexuality, and physicality reciprocally constructed each other and led to the different stories of female

athletes in terms of situating into the male-dominant sport. Two aspect themes that athletes constructed within their experiences in boxing were generated as: (a) fitting into the masculine sport context, and (b) challenges in the masculine sport context. Different from the previous research that solely emphasized the identity conflicts of female athletes for situating in the masculine sport subculture and meeting the hegemonic feminine ideal requirements (e.g., Kavoura et al., 2015; Krane et al., 2004), within the current research I defend that not all of the female athletes shared stories about paradox and exclusion from the masculine context. For the queer athletes, who are homosexual and physically strong, they stated they are fit into the masculine sport context better and are more comfortable with training with men. The nuanced stories showcased the intersectionality of identities. The female athletes with various sexuality and physicality are positioned differently in the social structure, and face different living realities. Therefore, they have different interpretations of the context and interactions. Furthermore, the athletes strategically perform their identities to meet the contextual situations. They asserted their masculine selves when they talk about being attracted to boxing, such as assertive, aggressive, or boyish. In the gym, they practically hid their femininity to avoid being sexualized or undervalued by male coaches and counterparts, but also negotiated the training volume with coaches to avoid getting too muscular. When the female boxers are being interviewed or do travel with the National Team, they made the effort to project their femininity in order to challenge the “butch” stereotypes of female boxers and to gain social advantage as much as possible. It was not only the identities that intersected with each other, distinguishing athletes as who they are, but also the athletes performing their identities to actively meet the contextual demands.

The results also highlighted the power relations and their dynamics in the sport subculture that intersected with mainstream culture. In boxing contexts, males were positioned in a higher status than females, where males and masculine values are dominant in this context. Thus, patriarchal ideologies and its derived hegemonic femininity values that men should be strong, assertive, heterosexual and masculine, while women should be weak, gentle, submissive, heterosexual and slim, both in the sport and in the larger society, constrained the female boxers to express their authentic selves, and also created the social inequalities toward people who do not conform to those images. For example, women who participate in this sport were taken for granted as the deviants of normal women. Meanwhile, due to the traditional stereotypes, women's presence and accomplishments in boxing were also being undervalued and not been taken seriously, especially in the local gyms. Generally, the patriarchal ideologies formed social barriers and pressures for women participating and performing in this sport, and has led to less positive expectations for female boxers. For some masculine and non-heterosexual women, as they were excluded from mainstream society in most occasions, the masculine subculture of boxing just offered an asylum for them to belong in and to justify their existences. However, the more intense they tie themselves to the sport, the more possible it is for them to experience maladaptation or identity trauma (see Dauglas, 2009) when they are transited out of boxing. The power dynamic is fluid as the female boxers make efforts to contest these patriarchal ideologies. For example, when the female boxers work much harder than men, they earn respect from the coaches and male teammates. What's more, instead of submitting to the hegemonic femininity, the female boxers constructed athletic femininity to challenge the traditional cultural image of female, in which they

portrayed themselves as powerful and beautiful. For the non-heterosexual female boxers, rather than stay in the closet, most of them chose to open their sexuality. The act of articulating their authentic selves not only give them power, but also empowers the young females and LGBTQ community in larger society as they are National Team athletes.

To provide cultural competent practices (Ryba et al. 2013), sport psychology researchers and practitioners should be aware of the multiple identities and intersections of athletes, and associate them with the embedded social structural status and cultural meanings. The challenges identified within the current project included the female identity being devalued in boxing, though progressively less so, queer athletes (homosexual and masculine) experiencing extra tension in the undressing spaces, and the female athletes must negotiate the somewhat dichotomous aspects of femininity and athleticism in boxing. All of these challenges result from the intersecting patriarchal norms of women and the masculine subculture of boxing. In order to help female boxers negotiate their identities within the masculine sport context, sport practitioners should facilitate gender and sexual inclusive language in sport. For example, sport psychology practitioners could provoke awareness of the adverse effects of gender discriminated discourses, such as boxing is a man's sport and women should not fight, and transform them into more gender inclusive discourses, such as boxing is for everyone. Secondly, practitioners should encourage women boxers to express whatever forms of femininity they like. On one hand, this act would empower female boxers to be themselves and cultivate confidence and self-acceptance. On the other, through the National Team platform, it would demonstrate the diversity of female athletes, and challenge traditional stereotypes as well as the patriarchal ideologies.

Chapter Six

In this Chapter, I aimed to explore the meanings of race/ethnicity, language, and religion to athletes on the National Team through the intersectionality framework. Drawing on “kaleidoscope” imagery, the following vignettes were developed to showcase the ways in which race and ethnicity, language, and religion (including spirituality) each take precedence at different moments in the boxing context, while simultaneously intersecting and overlapping with other shifting identities. The focus was to reveal how these different identity meanings act on one another to produce intersectional experiences of marginalization and dis/advantage that affect sport performance and well-being. In the first vignette, I presented the stories of racial and ethnic minority athletes on the National Team, noting the meanings and implications of her race/ethnicity identity to boxing, wherein she expressed the struggles of being different on the team and fitting into the white norms. In the second vignette, I presented the challenges that result from language and geographical division – Anglophone vs. Francophone – of athletes and coaches. In the last vignette, I revealed the significance of religion to athletes’ identity and boxing practices. The themes and subthemes of this chapter were presented below each theme.

6.1 Result

6.1.1 Being “different” as the ethnic minority on the team.

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes of Being Different as the Ethnic Minority on the Team

Themes	Subthemes
Ethnicity makes one different	Ethnicity is a part of oneself Ethnicity takes over other identities

	Fighting against the ethnic stereotypes
Fitting into the white norms	Adjusting to the whiteness way to speak
	Wanting to share ethnic culture on the team
	Thinking in the one's own cultural way
	Avoid teams' social activities

Vignette three. I'm [minority ethnicity]. I am comfortable with sharing that on the National Team. What I do not comfortable with is that people called me [non-white race], which means different thing to me. I do not just identify as a [ethnic minority identity] boxer, but I identify as a [ethnic minority identity] woman. I identify with it in my everyday life. It is important to bring that into boxing. If I can't bring that into boxing I think that would cause discomforts for me. But actually, it [ethnic minority identity] came also find its way into the sport. Due to I am successful in boxing, I was awarded and involved into different organizations of my ethnic community, just as the representative of it. Thus, even though I did not bring it [ethnic minority identity] up on purpose, it comes to boxing more than any other identities. I am not trying to say I don't like to be [ethnic identity], but it is just not something that necessary to do with boxing. Compare to the ethnicity, boxing is more like a reflection of me.

What makes it worse is that people used to see me and judge me more based on my [coloured racial identity]. They see me as [coloured racial identity], even as the image they portrayed in the American Movies. Rather than my own identity, the [coloured racial identity] catches all phrase for me. There are too many negative stereotypes and ideas that come to the minds of people who are not coloured when they think of what a [coloured racial identity] person is. Before anyone even sees that I'm an athlete they see me as [coloured racial identity] women and they start to think loud, confrontational,

aggressive, uneducated, raised poorly. And then when people think about me as an athlete, no matter how hard I work, when I start performing a skill really well it gets brushed off like ‘oh, that was natural’. Other athletes have actually said to me “[coloured racial identity] people can dance, that’s why you’re good at boxing.” It’s so frustrating to know that I am going up against all these stereotypes.

One of the most reoccurring things I fought against is how people are always judging the way I speak – like is she speaking like a normal [coloured racial identity] person? Is she using slang? I have to be acutely aware of how I structure my sentences and the words that I use every time I say something when I’m around my team and people in general, because it affects how they perceive me. I don’t want to play into their expectations. I want to show them that I am educated - I went to university and I got a degree. I’m proud of that. But even though I am educated I still like to talk fast and use a lot of slang around my close friends – I’m comfortable speaking like that and my friends get it. I just realize that I can’t speak this way at all times. I know the way I’m supposed to speak when I’m around other people outside of my friend group. I have to talk more formally in these settings so that I don’t perpetuate negative perceptions of [racial identity] people. Sometimes I will forget though. Like after I’ve just done some intense exercise and I’m out of breath what comes naturally is usually the slang. It just happens. Then when I have a chance to catch my breath and calm down my brain will click in again and I try to use proper grammar and more formal language. It’s like okay, I have to remember who I’m with. Because in the past and I’ve gotten a lot of “What? Ugh! Speak English!” from the boxers training with me (who are white). They will say “That’s ghetto the way you talk.” Then they will ask if all my friends speak like that. And I’ll say “yeah,

we all do.” But what they don’t know is that a lot of my friends are not [coloured racial identity]. So it’s not [coloured racial identity] slang. No one could understand my feelings because they are not [ethnic/racial identity]. This is not something my coaches can help me “deal with”. All they can do is say “Oh that’s terrible.” But unless you’ve really walked in my shoes it’s hard for me to believe you have any idea what this feels like. I feel that it’s on me to be different and fight against the stereotypes

As an [ethnic identity] athlete, there are things that I’m very proud of and unless you are knowledgeable about that country, you have no idea. My parents are from [heritage country], so with that there is different cultural things that I have in my background. In the gym when I heard a lot of how boxing is mental and physical, my brain automatically goes “and spiritual and emotional.” The culture shapes how I look at how things come together. They don’t come together in two ways, but in four. That the inherent viewpoint I have, not only specific to boxing. A lot of people that I meet are ignorant about [ethnicity]. They think all [ethnic people] are the same, however, in fact there are different classes, and we have ancestry in Italy, in France, and in Portugal. I wish people would understand more of my culture. I am willing to share that with my teammates what goes on in my homeland, the language, the music and the food there. However, it always seems come out of the left field if I would just break up a discussion from nowhere and say “oh OK, in [original country] they do this”.

What makes it even harder is that I am an introvert. When I am around new people and new social situations I like my quiet time, my alone time. I understand that on the National Team we are trying to build a cohesive team unit by spending time together and showing support for one another. But sometimes I get worn down from having to

present myself a certain way that I just want to be by myself, away from everyone. And that's not really encouraged because then you're not looking like part of that team. A lot of the time when we're in the group setting I'm not speaking at all, because in my mind I don't know what to say correctly. I'm present physically to show I'm trying to be a part of the team, because I don't want to be perceived as the "problem" athlete. But I can see very easily how that would come across and set me apart from my team. So I am conscious how I act around others and the way it is perceived.

Discussion. Boxing is a multicultural context. According to Schinke (2007), the Canadian Senior National Team was comprised of athletes with various cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (see also Schinke, Stambulova, Trepanier, & Oghene, 2015). In this project, we have female boxers who are of Algeria, French, African, Canada's Aboriginal population, and mainstream Anglophone and Francophone Canadians. They believe in Christian, Muslim, aboriginal spirituality, or atheist. At the time of data collection, they were dispersed in different geographic locations within Canada.

The above vignette was composed of the stories from ethnic minority female athletes shared in this research. From their narratives, we learned how the whiteness culture and practices are pre-dominant and normalized in the certain boxing contexts, and the meanings of being different as an ethnic minority athlete (Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003). Here, we see the significant meanings of racial and ethnic identities to the racial and ethnic minorities athletes. Harrison et al. (2002) illustrated people of color are more conscious with racial identities than white people (see also Blodgett et al., 2014; Butryn, 2002; Long & Hylton, 2002). Hurtado (1997) indicated that the most salient social identities for individuals are those that are belittled, those that need to be frequently

negotiated and those that have been politicized. Krane and Barber (2003) also found that individuals in marginalized group would emphasize group membership over personal identity, especially when their group identity is threatened. In the athletes' narratives, being the ethnic minority women was highlighted. There are stereotypes of women of color having historical and political origins of racism and sexism in U.S., where the gender and ethnic identities reinforced each other and "robbed women of color of a positive self-concept and prevented them from participating fully in society as equals as men or white women" (Murray, 2009, p.188).

Moreover, as minority athletes, they are also often regarded as representatives of their racial and ethnic communities – whether they want to be or not – thus, reinforcing the racial and ethnic identities of athletes. Yet they are also confronted with the fact that being ethnic minority has nothing to do with boxing and they were more comfortable with being regarded as just boxers. This contradiction of words indicate the dichotomy of athletic and racial identities, which reveals the fluidity of identity, or an uncertainty as to who she is (and can be) within a boxing sport. Brown et al. (2003) found that black student athletes who strongly identified with athletics reported low levels of racial identity centrality. Thus, the cost of focusing on her excellence as a performer for the athlete is when her identity could no longer be centralized (i.e., she feared living outside of boxing as retired), and so, what she was left with was her racial identity that was lonely to navigate. In the current research, one of the athletes was upset about people attributing her athletic achievement to her racial roots, which brushed off her efforts. This also indicated that the athlete did not integrate her racial identity with her athletic identity, or even worse, rejected the racial part of herself in constructing her own identity.

Fighting against the negative stereotypes was the main theme of the athletes' narratives pertaining to racial identity. Withycombe (2011) found that the drive to break down racial stereotypes and stimulate more empowering racial images within sport is a consistent experience amongst African-American athletes. In the current study, one of the athletes found some derogatory cultural stereotypes of boxing overlapped with those of her racial identity, such as being poor and being uneducated, which seems to confirm her racial identity for participating in sports. Thus, to protect their positive self-image in terms of race, gender, and athletic identity, the racial minority athletes enacted meaningful behaviours, such as resisting being called [racial identity], and getting an education degree to resist against the racial stereotypes. The athletes also expressed that they prefer to use ethnicity rather than race to represent who they are, because the racial identity contains more discriminative meanings while the ethnic identity was more neutral.

The derogatory stereotypes were derived from the historically constructed whiteness society, where white people differentiate other cultural groups to maintain their privilege (Butryn, 2010; Sue, 2004; Waldron & Butryn, 2006). Sport is also dominated by the white practices, values, and ideologies. For example, the widely accepted boxing practice was instructed in a dualistic way – mental and physical. However, in the aboriginal athlete's understanding, nature and human beings were composed in four ways: mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual. Moreover, contrasting to the hyper-awareness of race expressed by the non-white athlete, white people notoriously equate race and ethnicity with non-white "others," while simultaneously classifying themselves as "just people". The white Euro-Canadian participants were dismissive when discussing

race and ethnicity. One of them resisted even using the word “race” in her narrative, simply referring to “it” after being prompted by the researcher. She succinctly explained that “it” is not something that affects her, although “it” may affect others, such as African American and Spanish boxers on the men’s boxing team. This indifferent attitude led to implicit exclusion of racial minority athletes and their issues.

One of the ethnic minority athletes changed the way she verbally interacted with her teammates to resist the ghetto stereotype and to fit in with white speaking mannerisms. She described the concerted effort she made in her everyday training environment as the determination to avoid using colloquial language so that her teammates and coaches will view her as intelligent, and educated-means more ‘white’, and therefore, more readily to accept her. Śliwa and Johansson (2014) reported similar findings regarding the non-native English speaking staff in metalinguistic companies being devalued by his or her accent and they themselves internalized the judgement seeing their own accent as carrying a “stigma,” thus leading to self-excluding behaviour. From this non-white athlete’s narrative, language is a vehicle to challenge others’ assumptions that she is just [racial identity]. She submitted to the alleged “formal” way of speaking that is not authentic to who she is. This reveals the complex layers of oppression that athletes of color have to fluidly navigate around language within Euro-Canadian contexts.

Despite the social-historical power differences between white people and other racial groups, another major attribute of the white normativity was the disproportionate numbers of white (male) administrators and coaches who supervise cultural diverse institution (Butryn, 2002). Jowett and Frost (2007) found ethnic background as a

meaningful and influential factor for the relationships that the minority athletes had developed with their coaches by making up the content and intensity of bond. Black Athletes who have the opportunity to be coached by a black coach would have allowed a higher degree of communication exchange and empathy. Here, the athlete expressed the lack of resonant support with the coaches and teammates about her suffering, which reinforced her loneliness on the team and isolated her with the rest of team.

The isolation also resulted from the subordinate meanings of racial identities. To protect themselves from being discriminated or assaulted by their races, the racial and ethnic minority athletes proactively alienated themselves from the team, even though they were eager to be integrated. In this research, the racial and ethnic minority athletes expressed their willingness to share their cultures, which indicated a positive adaptation of their racial and ethnic identities (Quintana, 2007). Walker and Melton (2015) found that minority athletes often conceal one of their less-visible marginalized identities while emphasizing a valued identity that supports institutional norms in order to avoid differential treatment and reduce minority stress. Compared to the racial identity, the ethnic terms have less negative connotations. As aforementioned, athletes would like to share her ethnic identity instead of the racial identity. However, there were few opportunities for her to share this part of herself with the team, which hindered her identity expression and led to the ethnic minority athletes to separate from the team further by withdrawing from the team activities. The repression or fluidity of identity evidenced how athletes lose a sense of substantiation and social connectedness within their teams in some moments, damaging their sense of belonging and well-being (Blodgett et al., 2014).

As a result, athletes shifted between moments of identity expression and identity censoring as she navigated and performed within the boxing context.

6.1.2 French-English divisions on National Team.

Table 4

Themes and Subthemes of French-English Divisions on the National Team

Themes	Subthemes
Communication on the team is bizarre	People speak two languages Bilinguals help the team integrate Showing respect and support to each other
The division between Anglophone and Francophone athletes	Anglophone athletes are separate with Francophone athletes Anglophone athletes cannot understand French coaches' instruction

Vignette four. Communication on the team is bizarre. If you look at every other team in the world you will see that they all speak one language. But in Canada we have half our team speaking French and half speaking English. The team is bilingual, the Francophone athletes are mostly from Quebec, and Anglophone athletes are from the rest of Canada, most from Ontario, and also Nova Scotia or whatever. We also have athletes from Arab, France and other places, they speak mixed French and Arabic, French, Quebecois, and Spanish. In the team, we have good relationship between English and French athletes. We chat in the both languages. Many Francophone athletes know at least a little bit English, but not a lot English athletes understand French. Sometimes people would say, “OK now we have to speak English for everybody to understand” and, we also speak French frequently. It’s funny but also frustrating that when we won in the

competitions, the French and Québécois don't know how to sing the English Canadian National Anthem.

If I am the only English one present with French crew, they will start speaking English. I understand how important it is to be able to speak their own language, so I will tell them “go back to speak French, not just because I am here”. Sometimes English people insist that others speak in English because they just want to understand the conversation. We have bilingual athletes and coaches on the team, who always help to bring the team together by translating for both of the groups. They try to include everybody, and they don't want to have a separation. Our team definitely does have a good attitude and attempts to communicate with one another. People who started off only speaking English now can speak a little bit of French, as we learn from each other. In the recent five years, people are getting better with each other and we have a good team spirit. In the competition, we always cheer for each other, because we all representing Canada. It would be annoyed if people don't have the attitude to learn. Language is a tool to connect people, if you could speak both language, you would have a better connection with the team.

But I will be honest that there are tensions in the team in terms of language barriers. It is that when we are travelling, and competing, most of team is always half and half. So it's half French, half English. I remember my very first tournament ever on the team, I was the last one into the dining hall for team meal, and when I walked into the room I immediately noticed a divide in the team. There was one table with all the English-speaking people, and another table with all the French-speaking people. I remember thinking it was so weird. So I pointed it out like “Hey, what is this, English

versus French?” I didn’t really know why there was that division at that time. But now, years later, I understand it better. One of the reasons is that if you’re from Ontario you’re on the Ontario team, you get to know the people who are also representing Ontario. So when you finally do make the National Team, of course you’re going to spend more time with the people speaking your language, partially because it’s easier to communicate and partially because that’s whom you are already familiar with. Another example is when we were traveling to competition, at the hotel, we don’t pair someone who doesn’t speak English well with someone who speak English. And when we’re going like going out for supper or hanging out, some people can get upset because they feel like they are being left out of certain groups or conversations. And then when it comes to competition, people are already on edge, any little thing can set them off and people just want to be surrounded by who can communicate easily with and get that verbal support from. In the competition, we pair each other in the most effective way.

Moreover, there is a communication problem where we have coaches and athletes not speaking the same language. We are supposed to have a bilingual coach travelling with the team during competitions. But you know what? A lot of times the coach speaks primarily French, so he isn’t really bilingual. And when he is in the corner with me during a boxing match I get really pissed off because I’m like I can’t understand what you’re saying! He would yell things in French to me sometimes and that irritated me so much. Like I don’t speak French! I don’t know what you are telling me! I only have that minute rest and I’m in the heat of the action, so there’s no time for trying to translate. My adrenaline is pumping and I can’t slow down my thinking. It’s just like “Fuck man, why do we always have to have a French guy in our corner?” English-speaking athletes need

an English coach. If we have to have someone who's bilingual we want it to be someone who speaks English first and can also speak French. But that's never the case. And by the same token I'm guessing that the French athletes are saying the same thing about wanting a French coach.

Discussion. Language remains a relatively unexplored identity area within the CSP scholarship when compared to other sociocultural identities related to gender, class, race, and ethnicity. Beyond research that takes up language through narrative or discursive approaches (McGannon & Smith, 2015; McGannon & Schinke, 2013; Ronkainen et al., 2016), little data has been gathered around the linguistic identities of athletes (Blodgett, 2017). Canada is an official bilingual country where in contrast to the domination of English, French is more concentrated in Québec (Buurmann, 1999), and also strong in New Brunswick and throughout Ontario. In boxing Canada, Québec boxers, coaches and directors account for half of the team (retrieved the information from <http://boxingcanada.org/elitenationalteam/>, 2018).

Language is one of the ways in which we categorize others and ourselves as belonging to particular groups and subgroups (Harzing & Feeley, 2008), which usually aligns with the geographic locations, ethnicity or nationality that differentiate people with various cultural backgrounds. In sociolinguistic studies, language is bonded with culture, which provides different manners of phrasing and communication, and is embedded with cultural norms and values (McGannon & Smith, 2015). For example, the language with gender mark (such as French) strengthens the differentiation between women and men. Some instances impacted the female presence on the subsidiary boards of multinational companies (Santacreu-Vasut, Shenkar & Shoham, 2014). Language also forms people's

thinking and shaping their mental representation of social reality, such as the patriarchal cultural narratives of gender linked to women's willingness and proactivity for participating in physical activities (McGannon & Schinke, 2013; Kavoura, Ryba & Chroni, 2015). Hinds et al. (2014) demonstrated language, identity, and context intertwined with each other, which indicated this contextual fluidity of the linguistic identity. Due to both English and French athletes in this study being immersed in the larger Canadian culture, the mutual constitutive effects are more complex. In the current theme, we only focus on athletes' linguistic identities and the associated subgrouping process that seems to be presented in the Canadian National Boxing Team.

Language is one of the most visible markers of differences among people (Hinds, Neeley, & Cramton, 2014). The French writer Usunier (1998) in the intercultural communication argued "In the universal process of cultural homogenization, the role of language will remain intact as a key cultural differentiator, while other sources of cultural differentiation will progressively disappear" (p.167). Within the bilingualism of Canada, the Quebec government insists on keeping French as the sole official language of the province to save their culture, as English remained the dominant language in most provinces and most domains of life (Buurmann, 1999). In the current project, the athletes from Québec and the rest of Canadian English speaking area explicitly expressed the differentiation between "us" and "them" based on the language, which were affiliated with the geographic location, and institutional belongings. The athletes were close with teammates who speak the same language and from the same local gyms. The novel findings in our study were related by the bilingual and multilingual athletes' identities in terms of how they positioned themselves in these two linguistic camps, which revealed

the complexity of linguistic identity. One bilingual boxer, whose family is from Québec, found herself more related to French culture, even though she trained and lived in Ontario (Anglophone speaking area) and used English in daily life and the sport. She placed herself in the middle of the Anglophone and Francophone athletes, between which her identity fluidity depended on the situation, while two immigrant athletes who spoke both languages positioned themselves as “outsiders,” neither belonging to the Anglophone nor Francophone groups. They noticed the division in the team, but they did not care about it as much as the bilingual facilitators. The nuanced positions that derived from the intersecting identities of language and ethnicity were not reported in the previous literature, however, indicating the varieties in team dynamics and different levels of integrations among athletes (e.g., Blodgett, Ge, Schinke, & McGannon, 2017).

International business studies offered valuable insights and evidences of the team dynamics in the multilingual/multinational organizations. They pointed out the links between power imbalance and language competences (Harzing & Feeley, 2008; Sanden, 2016; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014). Śliwa and Johansson (2014) illustrated that language competency does not only function in employees’ status, but also creates social cohesion and cultural identities by using shared language. Lau and Murnighan (1998) explored the demographic diversity in organizations and proposed a fault line model to explain the subgroup conflicts. In their theory, the demographic differences among people were the fault line of conflicts, which would be activated when they were meaningful to the group’s accomplishment. In Hinds et al. (2014)’s study, language was found as a potential fault line dimension that erupted into subgrouping and conflicts along with location and nationality. In some teams, the fault line lay dormant, while in others, it was

activated through power contests. The emotional responses to language asymmetries were associated with exclusion and inflamed anxieties in those less powerful teams. In this project, the athletes expressed the unite and divisive moments on the team in terms of language. They articulated that the Francophone and Anglophone athletes get along with each other, however, were having tensions in dining room and competitions. From this, the readers could acknowledge the fault line was dormant in general context, while being activated in the competition, where the atmosphere is intense, or in other certain contexts that people could share the closeness, such as dining room or hotel room. I extended the knowledge of this area by finding the fault line that was constructed differently by people who are relevant. Furthermore, in contrasted to Francophone athletes who hold the positive evaluations and attitudes towards the language issue, the Anglophone athletes expressed more struggles in this division and its negative effects on team dynamics as well as their own sport performance. This separation is probably due to: first, French athletes were from the same province where they had close in-group bonding; and second, most French athletes could speak English, which increased their competence in the bilingual context. Inversely, Anglophone athletes who did not speak French experienced incompetency and exclusion when being around with French athletes and coaches. These all transferred the linguistic power to the Francophone group in daily practices. The athletes from different language power group constructed the language divisions differently. Lau and Murnighan (1998) stated, on the condition that the two groups are comparable in size and power, they tend to experience more intense and overt power dynamics. The power of English dominance in Canada as well as in the global settings contributed to the power contest on the National Team, where Anglophone

athletes show less willingness to learn French. Rather than engaging in a reciprocal learning process, the Anglophone athletes tended to task the responsibility for changing to the French athletes and coaches in communication (Middleton et al., in press).

The cohesiveness of the subgroup and their highly-correlated attributes would increase the subgroup polarization and entrenched subgroup conflicts. On the contrary, when the demographic fault line was not activated, the polarization would naturally decrease, as the familiarity of in-group and out-group members accumulated or having the common task (Lau & Murnighan, 1998). In my study, the Francophone group is more polarized on the National Team due to shared linguistic, ethnic culture, and affiliated institution, where being Francophone, Québécois, and Québec athletes intersected with each other and strengthened the polarization. The division of language groups on the National Team is also eliminated when the Canadian identity became salient / central. The athletes expressed when at international competitions, where the girls travelled outside of the country, they would rather consider themselves Canadian athletes and fighting for Canada. Thus, the nationality and linguistic identities were alternatively salient, counterbalancing the team dynamics.

6.1.3 Religion is an important but personal thing.

Table 5

Themes and Subthemes of Religion is an Important but Personal Thing

Themes	Subthemes
Boxing is a spiritual practice	Boxing heals one's essential crisis
	Boxing facilitates spiritual development
Religion is important to boxing	Religion is common in boxing
	Prayer is a part of ritual of competition
	Prayer for protection rather than win

Religion is a personal thing	Muslim boxers need to do fasting
	People don't ask religion on the team
	Religion makes people relate to each other more

Vignette five. I was an alcoholic. I had some existential crisis for years when I started boxing. I came to the gym when I had a lot of really screwed up behaviour. Rather than kicking me out, the coach thought “she need that”. Then, boxing became the modality for healing. Boxing is a body movement discipline, like dance and yoga. When I am training, I am not thinking like “go harder, go harder, go harder”. I am thinking how is my body reacting to this, or like what can I do to make this movement more efficient, and then I do that thousands and thousands of times until it becomes reflexive. Learning makes me stay in boxing, and probably be central to my joy. Through learning and moving, I find a bit more equilibrium and started open myself to accept new healing thing. Boxing has changed my life, as it is a positive place to put energy.

Boxing is a very spiritual sport. In the gym, people said a lot of how boxing is mental and physical, my aboriginal brain automatically goes “and spiritual and emotional.” This is my inherent viewpoint to see how things come together. It's not necessarily something that I bring into the ring, but it is important to have head in the right place. Spirituality is very important in boxing because it is a combat sport, like a battle that you are going into an unknown territory where someone is trying to beat you up, and you are trying to beat them up. There are so many aspects that are beyond your control when you step into the ring; it's kind of like you are going to war against your opponent and it's a battle to the death. So you have to be able to grab that faith when you need it to give you strength and protection. I think that's different from a lot of other

sports. If you go to a boxing show in the U.S. or Mexico, for example, you will see the majority of athletes do something to show their religion when they're in the ring. People will pray for a match on their knees in front of everyone, and talk to God at the corner in terms of the results of their match and protecting them through the match. Some athletes will make the sign of a cross at the end of their fight or will look up to their higher power. It's those little actions where you catch glimpses of athletes drawing strength from their religion and showing their faith.

We have a couple of Christians, a couple of Muslims, and some boxers who are open and just believe in higher powers which are not specific to one religion. I am a Christian. My religion is very important to me, which has been a part for me as a boxer. I got it from my mom, as Christian is her personal faith. I remember she gave me a bible and tell me to read them. There are always things like protection, strength and overcoming in the bible. Then in my competition, praying became part of my routine. When I was in a very stressful situation or nervous about something, I feel like just listening to Christian music allows me to focus properly and think properly. It's not like always Christian music, sometimes it's a slower type music. It relaxes me, and when I compete, it makes me like in that zone. I use my religion to give me strength and protection in the ring. When times get tough or I go through stressful events, I pray a lot even when I get in the ring, which help me control my nerves and pressure. It is a big part that makes me feel I have somebody to rely on. I can put the uncertainty of what's going on in his hands rather than my own hands. It is not praying to win a fight, it is more of put the faith that you will be protected. I've done it a few times during major events and that's kind of where I feel I get the best results, and might just continue to do it.

For me, I mostly do religion for boxing, while for Muslim boxers, religion probably is as the same important as boxing. I have teammates from Arabic, who are Muslims and need to do Ramadan for some weeks a year, while they don't eat and everybody fasting. So it was a hard thing during the competition because the coach used to say, "you have to eat, you have to drink if you want to be able to do the competition", but for them it was like "no I have to do it. I will do the boxing thing and I will have my religion too". It's not something people will judge if she does it or not, it's something she believe is good for her and willing to do it autonomously. I guess coach have a hard time with that. They don't tell it, but they don't expect them to perform like they can do with food and water. I also have some teammates who have mixed religion beliefs or just believe in that there is something bigger than themselves and their opponents in the ring. They get some guides or comforts from their higher power, such as the sense of purpose or just putting them at ease, even they don't have specific religious practice.

Religion could make people related to each other more, like Christian with Christian, and opens up conversations that they normally wouldn't have had. But in most occasions, people's religion or spirituality is a very personal thing. It's not something I talk openly about on the team. It's more of a personal relationship between my belief and me, rather than it is something I feel necessary to tell everyone. I have one teammate who is rather solitary on her religion, but she never goes to church or pray with people from boxing. She tends to hide it. For me, I don't hide it and but I prefer to be alone and away from distractions when praying. I have done it out in the open before and I was comfortable doing so. People on the team also respect that. I have a friend saw me praying before every fight for twelve years but never ask a question because she doesn't

want me to feel uncomfortable. It's like something that everyone knows, but we don't really sit there to discuss.

Discussion. Sport is a highly spiritual place as it is an expression of the human spirit (Perry et al., 2014). In sport, people pursue transcendence, virtues, and purpose. Athletes use religion to ask for protection, health, and to overcome failures, struggles, and adversities. These moral values, which are also the Christian narratives, such as discipline, sacrifice; self-awareness, loyalty, solidarity, friendship and generosity were centralized and promoted. On the other hand, sport is a new religion, which performs some functions in today's society consumed earlier by religion. Sport fans involve themselves and identify with particular sport clubs, creating the belonging, rituals, and beliefs, and endorsement of sportsman as idols, icons, and national heroes. Religion or spirituality has not been considered in sport psychology research very often, however, the religious or spiritual observances and beliefs have been used a lot in sport psychology mental training and counselling (Watson & Nesti, 2005), such as mindfulness techniques (Gardner & Moore, 2012), flow experience (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), and peak performance (Maslow, 1968). A considerable number of media reports (Maranise, 2013) and existing special organizations (i.e., Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Muslim Women's Sport Foundation, and the Centre for Sport and Jewish Life) gave evidence to the popularity of religious practices in sport (Sarkar, Hill & Parker, 2015).

Following Humanism as an approach to sport psychology, sport practitioners should focus on athlete's individual holistic development, including physical, social, moral, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development (Perry, et al., 2014; Maranise, 2013). Nesti (2011) proposed a new path for sport psychology: move away from mind-

numbing reductionism and toward a more holistic understanding of sport in which pain, suffering, hope, passion, spirit and other unquantifiable affections are recognized as central issues. Athletes are meaning seeking, story-telling creatures, who can encounter real drama, experience excellence and self-discovery in healthy sporting context (Watson, 2010). Through focus on meanings and purpose (spiritual part of self), personal development comes together with the advancement of virtues, into the identity of the sportsperson, organization and community. The virtues of the individual are the strengths of character that enable excellence (Perry et al., 2014).

The terms religion and spirituality have often been used interchangeably (Watson & Whites, 2007). Religion is considered to be something concerned with external and objective organizational practices about a higher power that is focused on what one performs in a group setting, whereas spirituality is defined as an internal, subjective, and divine experience (Hyman & Handal, 2006). Hill et al. (2000) defined spirituality as “the feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviours that arise from a search for the sacred” (p. 66). Scholars have documented that the religious ritual leads to a greater holistic development in the aspects of physiology, emotionality, intellectuality, and spirituality (Maranise, 2013). In the book, *Sport and Spirituality* (Parry, Robinson, Watson, & Nesti, 2004), the author conceptualized spirituality into four intriguing layers: life meaning; religion; psychological wellbeing, and ethics. According to them,

Spirituality is not simply about fine ideas and aspirations, but about the embodiment and the lived experience of beliefs and values that inform and provide the backdrop to people’s lives. Hence, the real exploration of spirituality in sport is in the reflection, the dialogue and the practice. (p. 14).

Getting rid of the excessive adherence to rules and formalities, spirituality is an emerging cultural phenomenon that appeared on the decline of the influences of religion (Parry, et al., 2004). The move is characterized as the trending practices toward humanity and wellbeing (i.e., learning and caring). In the spiritual approach, feeling and experience are paramount and everyone is free to choose his or her own spiritual path. Spiritual development is as important as moral, cultural, mental, and physical development, and thus, spirituality is wider than simply religion. One of the major criticisms of the spirituality movement is that this movement is circulated in articulate, middle class and middle-aged groups, and that they have no more success in connecting with the vast majority of the population than the main line faiths (Perry et al., 2014). Thus, spirituality and religion represent different meanings and are used in different identity groups. In the previous vignette, I merged the stories of “spirituality” and “religion” to indicate the intriguing relationship between these two concepts in practices, while the nuanced meanings were presented for comparison. In the first subtheme of the vignette, I used “spirituality” to reveal how the athlete resolves life problems and develop spiritually through boxing, and in the second subtheme, “religion” was used to represent how the religious rituals and practices benefit athletes in their performance. The two terms are also quoted from the participants’ accounts where they pointed to different meanings.

Boxing is historically and culturally symbolized by the fighting spirit, where one can establish independence, individuality, fame, fortune, and most importantly, a clear triumph over another individual with nothing but one’s own hands (Bain, 2013; Ross, 2011), which implies the philosophical and social meanings of boxing to people. One of the athletes, who identified as queer, expressed that she struggled with the essential crisis

and alcoholism before, while through practicing boxing, she was healed. The self-narrative of suffering in life and healing in boxing ring confirms the cultural narrative of boxing, which indicates that the spiritual meanings of boxing to athletes are significant. Additionally, the athlete also mentioned two other major factors of boxing which helped her spiritual growth: the coaches' sympathy and acceptance, and the learning process. Coaches' non-judgemental acceptance is important for athletes, letting them build a connection and a sense of belonging in the club. The learning process strengthens the embodied positive experiences, such as gaining physical power and flexibility. All of these facilitate the athlete's development, helping her overcome spiritual emptiness. This story provided empirical evidence of how sport could function in athletes' spiritual development. A small script pertaining to intersection of ethnic and spiritual identities was inserted at the end: An aboriginal athlete emphasized how the spiritual and emotional dimensions were inherent viewpoints to understand the world. This small piece of story suggests that the recognition of the spiritual meanings of sport may differ in athletes that from different ethnic backgrounds.

During the second subtheme, I revealed the story of how religion benefited athletes in their sport performances. In the opening paragraph, I drew on the pervasiveness of religious practices in boxing. In the review of the role of spirituality in sport psychology consulting, Watson and Nesti (2005) mentioned the long tradition of integrating mind and body through spiritual awareness in martial arts. Drawing from the Eastern philosophies, sport coaches have formulated various frameworks for teaching, coaching, and enhancing spiritual growth for athletes, to help them overcome fear, self-doubt, anxiety, and lapses in concentration. These effects were confirmed in the current

study, where the athlete expressed that boxers need strength and protection in the face of their brutal and uncertain battles. In sport psychology, researchers have found top-class sportspersons committing to enacting ritual behaviours (i.e., superstitious behaviours) when the uncertainty is higher and the importance of the game is greater (Schippers & Lange, 2006). These ritual behaviours (i.e., superstitious behaviours) were regarded as “psychological placebo” for athletes to increase a sense of control and mental reassurance in unpredictable contest situation (Dömötör, Ruíz-Barquín & Szabo, 2016). Even though it bears a lot of similarities, religiosity functioned as different psychological aids for athletes. Maranise (2013) outlined the differences that separated superstition from religious ritual. From his perspective, the superstitious beliefs focused on the result, and could play both positive and negative roles in competition, while religious rituals provide significant meaning to the lives of athletes and their wellbeing, which could help them cope with challenges in life.

The athlete in the current study highlighted the importance of Christianity to her in both her drawing and interview accounts. In the drawing, she put the cross in the center of her mandala (see Figure 5), representing the significant meanings of religion to her whole identity. In her stories, she integrated religious practices into her pre-performance routine to release the stress and focused attention. Dömötör et al. (2016) summarized the differences between superstitious rituals and pre-performance routines. The authors pointed out pre-performance routines directly affect athletes’ technical or mental aspects of performance, while the superstitious rituals are characterized by rigid timing and fixed order that are only effective in lower anxiety and higher self-efficacy level situations. Thus, the athlete’s experience further demonstrated the differences between religiosity

and superstition. The religious practices, beliefs, and identity generate an inner strength and comfort for athletes to reach better self-control status.

Christian has dominated religious and spiritual research in sport psychology (Watson & Nesti, 2005). The current study extended this area by including Muslim women and examining how Islamic practices and identity impacted a female boxer's sport experiences. Walseth and Fasting (2003) studied Islam's view on women participating in physical activity and sport in Egypt and found a generally positive attitude towards women doing sport. However, the actual participation is influenced by different interpretations of Islam. The barriers of Islamic women participating in sport, included whether the sport place is gender segregated or not, do men in their family decide when they can sport, and whether it is an exciting movement. In the current project, from the teammate's view, the Muslim athletes are suffering more practical issues, such as Ramadan intermittent fasting. Previous researches have shown that Ramadan has controversial influence on athletes' performances, which depends on the domain and task (Chtourou, Hammouda, Souissi, Chamari, Chaouachi, & Souissi, 2011; Tian et al., 2011). The subjective feelings of fatigue and mood may add additional stress for athletes (Anis, Leiper, Niar, Coutts, & Karim, 2009). Studies also revealed the development and early implementation of coping strategies that can greatly alleviate the disruptions to training and competitiveness, thus allowing athletes to perform at a high level while undertaking the religious intermittent fast (Chaouachi, Leiper, Souissi, Coutts, & Chamari; 2009; Roy, Hwa, Sigh, Aziz, & Jin, 2011). In the current study, I extended the findings by including the coaches' attitude. The athlete expressed that coaches were unhappy with the fasting, which led to hesitations about athletes' competitiveness, but

implicitly. The coaches' distrust probably imposed negative effects on the Islamic athlete's sport opportunities and subjective feelings. Thus, the effects of fasting should include coaches' reactions. Perhaps it was examples such as this that explain why the athletes tended to keep their religion private, which was consistent with the trend of "privatising of things spiritual" (Perry et al., 2014, p. 25). In their argument, when the public language of spirituality, as practiced in the churches, was no longer accessible to the majority, the world of the spiritual was seen as private. The open and silent aspects of the religious or spiritual aspect of self also manifested the fluidity of athletes' identity expressions, where people selectively performed their identity according to the context's request. Above all, the traditional religious practices and identity is becoming a more individual and autonomous form of spirituality. Either spiritual development or the religious ritual is important for athletes to perform to excellence, though different religious identities and practices sometimes intersect with sport practices.

6.2 General Discussion

The second intersection was around the identities of race/ethnicity, language, religion, from which three major themes were extracted as (a) being different as the racial and ethnic minorities, (b) Anglophone and Francophone divisions, and (c) religion is an important but personal thing. The three identities within this intersection were naturally associated with each other due to the historical and geographical reasons, such as the European Canadians who live in Ontario are more likely speak English, or native Canadians have their own spiritual form of worship. Thus, differing from the analysis in the first intersection of identities that focuses on the intra-group differences, I focused on the intergroup differences and relations of each identity, while the intersecting effects

were interwoven within it. For example, to fight against the uneducated stereotype and fit in the white-dominant context, the black athletes put a concerted effort to speak in what was sarcastically presented as a “better” manner (i.e., white manner), which brought a lot of anxiety into her training and interactions with teammates. The language represented a competent power on the team, which not only marginalized ethnic minority athletes, but also created divisions between English Canadian (Ontario athletes) and French Canadian (Quebec athletes). The bilingual context was found more problematic to Anglophone athletes, as they were less likely to learn French, and coaches on the corner are Francophone. Contrary to language that created divisions on the team, religion was used to connect with people by some athletes. The isolated black athlete expressed that religion could open a lot of conversations that she normally would not have had with people. However, most boxers on the team opted not to talk about religion as they thought it is their personal relation to higher power, thus closing this athlete’s opportunity to connect with her teammates.

These three identities were not related to boxing directly, however, each of them was constructed meaningfully to athletes’ sport experiences and team dynamics, which positioned them within different power relations and led to different attitudes and behaviours. For example, when the athlete identified herself as ethnic minorities, she perceived she was differentiated from the majorities on the team and withdrew from the team activities. Yet, when she identified as Christian or agnostic, she related to the team better, and when she identified herself as bilingual, she took the responsibility to integrate Francophone and Anglophone teammates. Thus, the athlete’s sense of self was fluid among these culturally constructed identities. The power relations behind these identities

also reflected the white privilege in mainstream society and in the current sport context, where the whiteness ideologies, practices and discourses were regarded as unacknowledged norms within the National Team while othering the non-white identities (Butryn, 2010; Sue, 2004; Waldron & Butryn, 2006). The aboriginal athletes, the non-European immigrant athletes, and the athletes of color needed to submit themselves to fitting into the white dominant context, which manifested in: the aboriginal athletes stuck in a paradox of whether (and how) to bring their ethnic identity into the ring; the Anglophone athletes tended to task the responsibility for changes to the French athletes and coaches in terms of language communication; and the coaches did not expect Muslim athletes to perform well during their fasting time. In the trend of embracing the cultural equality and diversity in the larger society, the whiteness centrality would cause intergroup conflicts within the National Team, creating openings for privilege.

To build up a culturally inclusive sport context, sport practitioners should enhance the awareness of culture differences on the National Team. Firstly, practitioners and coaches should become more deeply aware of their own identities and how these identities and their taken-for-granted practices formulate various derivatives of marginalization towards athletes. For example, a white coach commenting on the natural athleticism of a black athlete may be interpreted as racial stereotyping as opposed to a compliment. Thus, coaches should avoid the use of stereotypical language to categorize athletes and their behaviours. At the institutional level, practitioners should reveal the racial and ethnic diversities issues on the team to the coaches and administrators. To balance the power asymmetry of different ethnic groups, when developing training regimens and team norms, coaches should leave room for athletes to reveal their diverse

cultural backgrounds and insert their own identities or culturally meaningful behaviours. To support the racial and ethnic minority athletes, practitioners could also use structured activities to foster integration into the team, such as assigning leadership roles to athletes considering diverse identities, highlighting their specialty and contributions on the team. Meanwhile, practitioners should help athletes navigate their identities between their ethnic subcultures and the prevalent mainstream culture.

Chapter Seven

In this chapter, we focus on the identities of athletic level, socioeconomic backgrounds, and weight categories. Here, the athlete level represents the organizational categories of athletes (Pool A, Pool B, Pool C) that were calculated based on a ranking points system. Normally, the more experienced and the greater achievements the athlete gets, the higher athletic level he or she has. Boxing is generally viewed as a poor man's sport, which also provides a way for upward mobilization. Women boxing has been included in the Olympic Games since 2012. However, so far, only 3 of the 10 weight classes are admitted for competing. The policies of the weight category created another unequal material and opportunities distribution in the sport institution. People's identities are not static. They are evolving as the situation changes. In the first vignette, I focused on the stories of athletes who are from low socioeconomic families and then achieved great sport success in boxing, where their identities changed dramatically. In the second vignette, I focused on the struggles of non-Olympic athletes who are not financially privileged and shifted their identities in and out of boxing. These two vignettes together suggest the needs of sustained institutional support for the marginalized as well as centralized athletes in their career developments.

7.1 Result

7.1.1 Rising up to a superstar.

Table 6

The Themes and Subthemes of Rising Up to a Superstar

Themes	Subthemes
Boxing is a poor man sport.	Feeling financially inferior in the basketball team Fitting into boxing immediately

Succeed in boxing	Comfortableness and confidence bring success The gain and loss after making the National Team Being proud of representing Canada
Sponsorship is overwhelming	Lack of support from teammates and administration Performance was negatively influenced

Vignette six. I remember specifically I started playing on the basketball team where my teacher was the coach and he paid the fees for me to play, because I cannot afford it. Being there I am very uncomfortable because all my teammates were from families have more money than us. Their parents drove them in their nice cars to practice and bought their nice shoes. Compare to them, I would only show up on the bus if I could scrounge up the bus fare and I only had these really shitty shoes. I remember how uncomfortable I was and being unable to play at there, it really got to me. I was different from my teammates, in a bad way, and I was very self-conscious about it. When I started boxing, I walk in the gym and everybody in this sport are kind of from ghetto. It's a poor man's sport. That made me comfortable automatically. Walking into the boxing club I didn't feel like I need to hide anything. Everyone seemed like me, which made it is easier for me to be me. Then I have the confidence to express myself. The more confident I am, the better I am going to perform. I knew right away that I would be successful here because I was very obviously comfortable in the gym.

Because of the comfortableness and confidence, I started getting more and more recognition in boxing. It's a relatively fast change in terms about years from my first fight to getting into the National Team, because some people spend a long time letting up to the level. It was a really quick move, and my identity had shifted in the sense of more self-respect, and more self-worth. I started relaxing in the big way after I made the

National Team. On the National Team, it really took a while for me to adapt to the new environment. I did not feel being included on the team immediately, but there were a few girls who had been on the team for a long time were also from the conservation, just as me, they were all pretty welcoming and helping. It's a very natural competitive environment. We have a lot of talented athletes on the team. Absolutely at that level we all have a certain talent but I am not the all that talented boxer, I think I got to on the team mostly because of my determination and hard working. I received a lot of respects when people see the way I work in the gym. I think boxing change my life, I don't know where I would have been if I would not have been involved in this sport. Through boxing, I got support for my education, my coach encouraged me to get into college after I graduated from the high school, and my tuition fee were paid when I was carded. I met a lot of great people who taught me a lot of things along the way, I had a better personal community, and I could involve into a lot of things I would never expected and gave back to people. It just made me a better person all around.

Sport made me realized who I was, and what I wanted. It allowed me to get to know amazing people, and to create amazing bonds with them. It allowed me to travel and to share my passion. Most of people are okay being average, or others are satisfied to be average but they don't push themselves in absolutely every domain, like the mental, physical, technical and tactical aspects. But living in a natural competitive environment, the idea of surpassing yourself absolutely live in athletes' minds every day. What makes the difference between athletes and average men is that the average men don't have to change certain things, while being an athlete, you have to change, to self-ware, and to be disciplined if you want to reach the top. In this sense, sport completes a person. Every

time you leave for competition you come back with a different mindset. You have a different vision about yourself, about in general, and about boxing. I think it does not only relate to sport, it relates to personal life too. Everyday you learn to know yourself; everyday you look for perfection in the sense that you always want to get better, where you don't want to stay at the same level. I think it's the nicest thing and that's why no matter the obstacles in my way, that positive will always win. You just need to be passionate about what you are doing. Being an athlete also means living in a different life style than others. I always felt that I was different because there is no one has a life like I have. Especially in boxing, where have not many girls being with. It's not a normal life. I train two or three times per day. I eat twice as much as normal. I sleep between my training sessions. I spend my savings on boxing. I don't go to parties, and I can't drink alcohol. My friends outside boxing are always mad at me because they don't understand why I stay there, why I can't let loose, and why I only focus on my own objectives. But these sacrifices overall are much less important than the recognition. Even though it looks like there are more sacrifices, they are less powerful than being a role model and representing Canada.

As a National Team member, maybe not when you first start. But as you get on the team for a little longer, you almost have this feeling that people in general looking up to me. So I think I look at myself the way that they would look at me. When people introduced me to someone in the gym, or even outside the sport, the first thing they are going to say is "oh, this is [name], she is on the National Team". It automatically right away puts that in the mind. We have that on our shoulders all the time. Especially when the coach put some respect in you because you are more experienced. I'm telling myself I

have to be a good model and to show how to be a good athlete, respect the coaches, respect the other teammates. So we have to portrait a good example to follow, which is nice and also very motivating. Having the acknowledgement from boxing community, from my entourage, from my neighbours, and even from the federation is an important source of motivation every morning to say, “Okay, I put my Team Canada tuque and I’m going to run”. That’s my biggest motivation.

Until just one year before Olympic when the first time I felt uncomfortable in this sport. I got a commercial sponsorship because of my success, which made me very awkward to have that recognition, because I was the only one on the team. It is really overwhelmed. We’ve had a lot of successful athletes, but we’ve never had any who have corporate sponsors going to the Olympics, with commercials and billboards. Actually, it was even more uncomfortable being with my teammates. I feel I was been left out. The girls were jealous, rather than seeing it in a positive way like “oh, cool”, “our sport is up for the country to recognize, that’s awesome”, which are more pissed me off than anything. I don’t want to be the one that’s different than the rest of the team. It is not only for me, but also for Boxing Canada, was not used to the sponsor thing. Feeling that I had been distracted by the commercial thing, they sent me to abroad to have a training camp before Olympic. I never did it before, and the training camp is not even for me, but was designed for two male boxers, which ended up dragged me out of my comfort zone and lead to a bad performance in my Olympic.

Discussion. Boxing has historically been seen as involving working-class people in Europe, North/South America, and Asia (Fulton, 2011;Kim, 2012). The traditional narrative of the sport is portrayed as an up-mobile route that helps impoverished people

out of the ghetto to self-esteem and even great wealth (Bonhomme, Seanor, Schinke, & Stambulova, 2018; Fulton, 2011; Woodward, 2008).

Boxing subculture is sustained by a mixture of aggressive masculinity generated by lower-working-class communities, the capacity of boxing to provide a positively sanctioned channel for this trait and the impression that the sport can provide a temporary or even permanent sanctuary from poverty (Fulton, 2011).

In the first part of the vignette, one athlete situated her personal stories within the contexts of public narratives, wherein she constructed herself as being poor, uneducated, muscular, and has aggressive personality (the latter two were presented in Chapter Five, vignette one). These social identities were regarded as subordinate in the basketball team, comparing herself to other financial well-established players. On the contrary, however, fitting her into the boxing context, the athlete expressed gaining a sense of belonging, comfortableness, and feeling be equal with others since entering into the boxing gym. The experience demonstrated the importance of being comfortable with herself. Boxing, in other senses, offered an asylum for her, who is socially and economically marginalized in the mainstream society. Bonhomme and his colleagues (2018) also documented the stories of how experiencing hardships in early life stimulated the motivation for kids to enter boxing and became a world champion through the mass media. The practices of fighting with their own bare hands also symbolize the life situations of boxers (Woodward, 2008). Without being marginalized and oppressed, the boxer could express her whole self without any hiding, which generated the confidence of her to develop the sport skills. Wylleman et al. (2010) noted that intrinsic motivation provides a stronger and longer lasting impetus for young athletes' participation in competitive sport, which is

essential for these talented athletes embedded in an environment. Other than personal interests, and friendships that have been documented, this study revealed that identity belonging to the sport is also a critical source of athletes' intrinsic motivation. One athlete found teammates with the same ethnic identities and they helped her feel included in the team. Meanwhile, the coping resources and support was also correspondingly amplified.

Along with progress in their sport careers, the female boxers' identities were changing and evolving. Some of the old identities were eliminated while new ones emerged, such as the national team athletes, superstar athletes, sponsored athletes, winner or loser. The new identities represented their mobility in the social hierarchy. Schlossberg (1981) viewed adults' life transitions as "a change in peoples' assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behaviour and relationships" (p.5). Samuel and Tenenbaum (2011) proposed a scheme of change for sport psychology practices (SCSPP), of which they conceptualize transition as changing events. The transition may cause emotional and cognitive instability, leading athletes to appraise his or her coping resources and potential solutions before deciding how to respond. Wylleman and Reints (2010) found athletes describing their athletic careers by events (e.g., the initial selection for the National Team, a season- ending injury, winning a particular competition) or non-events, which were expected but did not occur (e.g., not being selected for the Olympic Games, missing out on a new record). These events not only bring forth a strong mix of emotions, thoughts, and behaviours, but in fact, lead athletes into a developmental challenge.

The identity change within athletes' career transitions is a rarely watched topic. Stambulova, Franck, and Weibull (2011) called for researchers to focus on in-career transition issues, and posed three challenges to be resolved – to apply a holistic lifespan perspective that includes transitions occurring in athletic career as well as those in other life domains; the cultural perspective that situates athletes in particular sociocultural contexts; and the longitudinal and concurrent designs. There were some researchers who documented the fragmented aspects of athletes' in-career transition experiences (e.g., Bruner, Munroe-Chandler, & Spink, 2008; Pummell, Harwood, & Lavalley, 2008). Other researchers suggested the individual nature of pathways to expertise (Phillips, Davids, Renshaw, & Portus, 2010). However, few researches delineated the continuous process of athletes' changes and growth. In the current study, I presented a coherent story of the female athletes' ups and downs in their careers as whole person rather than just boxers. The amalgamated story drew from multiple athletes' retrospective stories around significant events and transitions in their sport careers. The storyline was unfolded based on the athletes' accounts about how their identities shifted and privileged in boxing.

In the athletes' stories of this project, the significant events in their sports journey were always accompanied with identity changes. One of the athletes shared her story of being subordinated in the basketball team and in mainstream society because of her low socioeconomic status, non-education, and ghetto personal styles. Upon changing to boxing, the subordinate meanings of the above identities were eliminated as the athlete became just as equal as others, or even fit into the boxing subculture. The athletic identity arose, which was found in previous research (Stambulova et al., 2009), facilitating her into developing sport skills. Athletes' identity changed along with the progress in sport,

and with both the positive and negative implications (see also Sanders & Winter, 2016). One another athlete expressed her sense of self was enhanced after she made it into the National Team, with more self-respect and self-confidence, then started over relaxing. Bruner et al. (2008) explored the student-athletes who moved from junior to senior level, who reported experiencing transition difficulties both in and out the sport, particularly in relation to performance stress and changes in psychosocial support. It also took some time for athletes to adjust to the National Team environment. The athletes admitted that the National Team was a competitive environment, where they needed to work hard to get accepted and respect. The competitive environment, higher performance demand, and relationships between rookie and veteran athletes were presented as the first set of challenges for athletes after making the National Team.

The identity shifts also stimulated the changes in the athletes' outside world relationships. The achievement in boxing promised athletes a rather stable, healthy lifestyle, and broadened their life boarders. The acknowledgement from their living system – family, entourage, neighbourhood, even federation – instilled a consistent motivation for athletes to train and compete. The athlete's social statuses are accordingly enhanced by being National Team boxers, as they presented themselves as role models for the young athletes. The nationality identity is also strengthened by representing Canada, fighting on the world stage. To keep their identity in the high sport level, the athletes were required to have more dedication and sacrifices. One athlete expressed the sacrifices of normal life and relationships she made due to boxing. The athlete assimilated herself fully with athletic values to adjust to the competitive sport environment, such as discipline, concentration, organization, serious, respect. Douglas

(2009) also criticized the way in which athlete identity has continued to be constructed with an overly narrow focus on sport dedication, performance, and the competitive nature of being an athlete, failing to recognize that athletes are people who are also doing and being things outside of sport (e.g., as women, students, family members, spiritual beings, community members). When narrow performance-based conceptualizations of athletes are perpetuated within sport contexts, athletes are in jeopardy of fixating on that single identity and lacking alternative narratives to support their life transitions outside of sport (see also Henriksen et al., 2010; Ronkainen, et al., 2016).

In the current research, one athlete shared the story of crisis, where she was overwhelmed by the glory moment of her career. The athlete narrated that when she was preparing for the Olympic Game, she received a commercial sponsorship and overwhelming media attention. The unexpected success and recognition singled the athlete out of the team. Stambulova (2000) found athletes might experience “positive” events that cause tremendous change in their careers and require active coping; for example, an unexpected success that creates change in public status and overwhelming expectations – namely, crisis of glory. In the current study, the athlete pointed out that her challenge stimulated the pressure of being different from the rest of the team, and it was magnified by a lack of support from teammates and administration. The equilibrium and compatibility with boxing and boxers was further damaged by acquiring additional social power- commercial sponsorship and a billboard, which distanced the athlete with the rest of team and caused uncomfortableness and worries. In this case, the unsupportive response from teammates (i.e., jealousy) and ineffective intervention from administration (i.e., sending her to an unfamiliar training camp before boxing) caused serious mental

disturbances. Samuel and Tenenbaum (2011) suggested that if athletes cope with their changes successfully, he or she will experience an increased sense of control and reduced negative affect. The emotional and cognitive stability would be restored, and the individual would be able to continue developing in the athletic career. If an athlete cannot address the change or implement effective resources towards the change, he or she will fail to progress, thus negative affects and concerns will continue. Due to lack of effective support, the athlete performed terribly at the Olympic Game.

7.1.2 One Canada, two teams.

Table 7

The Themes and Subthemes of One Canada, Two Teams.

Themes	Subthemes
Lack of support for non-Olympic teams	<p>The separation of Olympic and non-Olympic athletes</p> <p>Close to athletes who share the same life-style</p> <p>The Disconnection between administration and non-Olympic athletes</p>
Balance boxing and life	<p>Boxer needs money to pay for the competition</p> <p>Balance of work, boxing and study</p> <p>Life priority shift out of boxing</p>

Vignette seven. Involving into the sport system, which is like a big machine, the athletes are like the models on the production line carpet, who are being shaped by the structure and organizations, namely, Boxing Canada and AIBA (International Amateur Boxing Association). Some of them are "super stars", some are our aspirations, some do boxing for show, and some do it for the recognition. We all have different motivations, even though we all come from different environments, different contexts, what we have in common with Boxing Canada is that we want gold medals. It's basically the main

thing, to not say the only thing. On the National Team, some athletes took boxing as a job, while some do it for passion. Boxing Canada chooses certain athletes (Olympic weight categories athletes) to invest their time and money in, while other athletes (non-Olympic weight categories athletes), I would say like us being put aside a little. For the Olympic weights athletes, they have plan, they have the money and the budget, they travel a lot, and the coaches put more attention on some girls who could give the results. They have competitions, and they also have the means to do it. For those non-Olympic athletes like us, we invest a lot of money, because we want to be there, because we want to represent Canada, but we actually don't know how important we are.

People always say boxing is a poor man's sport, where all you need is a pair of gloves, but I do feel there are a lot of barriers to be a boxer in terms of money. We have to pay for our own training, our coaching staff, our tournaments, our own travelling and stuff like that. If you are financially privileged, it probably easier, but for just ordinary people like us, we need to work to afford all of these. We cannot go to every competition, not only because we cannot afford it, but also because we have to work, we cannot take a week off. I need to pay my bills so no matter what happens I need to work the number of hours before putting all my time in training. It's difficult to work and be tired, then go to train, have a rest, then start again the day after. It's impossible to keep 20 hours of training a week, dealing with nutrition and rest and get really the best out of performances. I cannot sleep so much, so the consequence is being easily to get injured. The challenge for me is to have a rest and manage my trainings, my time, my money. One of my teammates ever said to me that "how do you do to work like that, I can't

work, I am not able to". I thought in my mind "Yes, you don't work because you are paid, you have money doing nothing".

On the team, I only close to the girls who have the similar lifestyles with me, because we can understand each other better. I am not jealous or say that we don't want them to perform well, but I don't talk to the Olympic boxers about my financial struggles like "I don't go to the competition because it's 2000 bucks" on the team, because I don't want to create some discomforts like I am whiney "I cannot go, you can go" something like that. I don't want them feel bad about us. On the team, we have an unwritten rule that if you are having a successful period and get a really nice check, just "enjoy but shut up". I don't have resentment, we are a team, we have so much fun together on the moment if we forget that aspect that is separated. I wouldn't blame the athlete, but the system. We are way more alone to train as athletes in a non-Olympic weight. It's been since the beginning of last year that we didn't have had physical tests and any competitions. We are responsible for our injuries and everything. The most challenge thing I faced in training is that I do so many hours training for very little competitions. So that's why I say there is "one Canada, two teams".

In Canada particularly, because we can't train with the whole National Team as that is often done in Europe. We train separately in our home gyms and the National Team changes every year. We only see each other a few times a year in competitions. As non-Olympic athletes, I don't feel any connection with the federation. Comparatively, the team at home is more important to me. I have a little circle there, we have worked together for a long time and they support me. They are really an integral part of my successes. One the National Team, the atmosphere is different. There is definitely an

expectation regards to being a National Team athlete specifically. With all the others around, we're going on a mission. It's kind of like going to war- we have a goal and we can't miss it. We have an amazing team, we do nice trips, and we have fun, but it's like we are just one member on the Boxing Canada. It's actually not about me, it's about representing my organization, and if I am not do it, someone else can do it. As a non-Olympic athlete, I don't see I have any connection with Boxing Canada. They don't know me, and I don't know them. But they made decisions for me in money and competitions. Last year the only competition that I really had was the World Championships, but two weeks before they cut me and don't bring me. They told me it's because of the budget, but I'm the one paying for my trip, what's the problem? It doesn't make sense. There is something wrong. It's my coach who finally informed me that I was not going. I had burnout because of that. I trained all year, but they didn't even give me the chance to participate. After that I've been a few months that I didn't even want to do boxing. People in the federation won't understand how much I sacrificed to get success this level. They don't know I'm a teacher. They don't know I teach kids having difficulties. They don't know that I started a boxing program at the youth center of neighbourhood and they don't know the human aspect of the person. They only know my results, my performances. They just need someone to win and will win. They made it seems easy to beat the best in the world.

I realize that I can't box forever. I like to box, but boxing is just a part or a phrase of life. I don't want to be a punch drunk, the person who slurs because they took too many punches. I don't want to stays in this sport too long and has nothing outside of boxing, when my career is over all I have is holding on to my glory days. I need to have a

plan after boxing. As the age growing, my life priority also change, my training time was always shifted depending on my competition schedule and my work. Three years before, I was putting more energy and more importance to the boxing, but now, it's changing. I have a daughter, so I try to have my job on the regular base, because family always comes to first. Before, in my first competition I was like "OK, I'm going away, I leave my family behind there and just thinking about boxing", but now it's impossible to only have boxing without thinking anything. If my family is fine everything is fine, I can put my head in a box. To get a good job, I am pursuing an degree, also. Boxers get a bad reputation for being uneducated so I'm proud when I share I have school, that usually surprise people. Not only can I hit a bag, but also I can read a book. Study really taught me critical thinking, made me efficient and organized both in my general life and in boxing. It made me feel a bit at ease in boxing, because I know that if I don't go as far as I would like to in boxing I have something to fall back on.

Discussion. The current vignette was composed by the stories shared by non-Olympic weight categories athletes. The storyline was unfolded around the themes of lack of support for non-Olympic athletes, be it to balance boxing and other aspects of life. The vignette presented the sport inequalities pertaining to the identities of socioeconomic status, weight categories, and athletic level. These identities intersected with each other and positioned athletes into the most accepted and taken-for-granted sport hierarchies of the current sport system. The athletes were distinguished pragmatically based on their outcomes by the administration, wherein the performance-centered narratives were dominant in the sport system. To gain a better interpretation of these identities, the local

sport system - Canadian sport system, Boxing Canada, and Olympics policies - on boxing was presented as sociocultural context as below.

ISSP published a Position Stand in 2009 that drew attention to connecting athletes' career development and their broader historical and socio-cultural contexts (Stambulova et al., 2009). They characterized the sport systems in the nations of North American, West European, and Australian with high competitiveness and human rights, because they were rooted in the democratic society structures and individualist cultures. To analyze the implications of the aforementioned social identities to sport, the background system is needs to be acknowledged. During the period between 1984 and 1988, the Canadian national sport organizations responded to public interests by attaining the highest possible level of achievement in international competitions and managing their organizations in the most effective and efficient manner. This change launched the professional bureaucratic organizational design, which centralized the power to the professional and administrations and the valued collective purpose (Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995). Since 1990s, the Canadian sport system carried out an athlete-centred governing approach to facilitate public and active sport participation, which started distributing power to athletes. Four strategies responding to this approach were enacted: athlete representation in decision-making committees of national sport federations; the creation of national sport training centres; increased direct funding to athletes and coaches to support them in their living and training; and a forum created to address and resolve disputes athletes may have with their coaches and/or national sport federations (Thibault & Babiak, 2005). As part of the general sport system, Boxing Canada is the national governing body for boxing in Canada, which claimed commitment to fairness,

teamwork, two-way commitment, financial responsibility, achievement, athlete well-being, and athlete-centered (retrieved from the official website of Boxing Canada, 2003). From Boxing Canada's high-performance program selection protocol (2017-2018), the National Teams selects and nominates athletes according to their performance by year, where the main objective of the National Team is to win gold medals at the Olympic Games. Athletes on the National Team are divided and carded by three levels of pools according to their achievements. Athletes who achieve and maintain podium in World Championships and Major Game's within the season are assigned to pool A; athletes that are capable of achieving top eight World Championships and podium on Major Game are assigned to pool B; athletes performing consistently at international competitions were assigned to pool C. From pool A to pool C, athletes garner different funding and professional services (e.g., massage therapist and mental performance consultant) and programs. These decisions are outside the realm of Boxing Canada, and are subsidized through funds provided yearly by Own the Podium (see Schinke, Stambulova, Trepanier, Oghene, 2015). Women boxing was recruited into the Olympics in 2012, however, only three of the 10 weight categories (flyweight 48-51kg, lightweight 57-60 kg, and middle weight 69-75 kg) were illegible to compete on the Olympic Stadium (retrieved from www.olympic.org). Based on these considerations, at the time, Boxing Canada offered different financial support for athletes of Olympic weights and non-Olympic weights to participate international competitions and training camps (see High Performance Program Selection Protocol, retrieved from www.boxingcanada.org). The non-Olympic weight category athletes needed to pay almost all of the fees before reimbursement, whereas for

Olympic weight categories athletes in pool A and pool B,' expenses were fully and mostly covered by Boxing Canada (see Graph 1, 2).

a.

POOL	ATHLETES CONTRIBUTION NON-OLYMPIC WEIGHT CATEGORIES					
	World Championships	International Competitions	Continental Championships	Continental Competitions	Dual match	Training camp
"A"	Transportation	100%	Transportation	100%	100%	100%
"B"	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
"C"	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Development	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Performance reimbursement (with at least one win)	100% - Gold medal 50% - Silver medal 25% - Bronze medal	50% - Gold medal 30% - Silver medal 20% - Bronze medal	50% - Gold medal 30% - Silver medal 20% - Bronze medal	30% - Gold medal 20% - Silver medal 10% - Bronze medal	--	--

*All the above programs are dependent upon available financial resources and may be subject to change.

b.

POOL	ATHLETES CONTRIBUTION FOR OLYMPIC WEIGHT CATEGORIES						
	Major Games	World Championships	International Competitions	Continental Championships	Continental Competitions	Dual match	Training camp
"A"	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
"B"	--	--	\$250 + Transportation	Transportation	\$250 + Transportation	\$250 + Transportation	--
"C"	\$250 + Transportation	100%	100%	\$250 + Transportation	100%	100%	\$250 + Transportation
Development	100%	\$250 + Accommodation and Meals	100%	\$250 + Accommodation and Meals	100%	100%	\$250 + Transportation
Performance reimbursement (with at least one win)	100% - Gold medal 50% - Silver medal 25% - Bronze medal	100% - Gold medal 50% - Silver medal 25% - Bronze medal	50% - Gold medal 30% - Silver medal 20% - Bronze medal	50% - Gold medal 30% - Silver medal 20% - Bronze medal	30% - Gold medal 20% - Silver medal 10% - Bronze medal	--	--

*All the above programs are dependent upon available financial resources and may be subject to change

Figure 9 The expenses and reimbursement of athletes within different pool participating competitions at different levels (a) for non-Olympic weight categories and (b) for Olympic weight categories. Copied from Boxing Canada official website <http://boxingcanada.org>.

From the athletes' accounts, there is a separation between the Olympic and non-Olympic athletes on the National Team. If athletes were in the Olympic weight categories, they were more politically and financially privileged on the team than the non-Olympic weight category athletes. Olympic weight category athletes were centralized by the administration and coaches as they have more financial support and international competing opportunities than the non-Olympic athletes. In the vignette, the identities of low socioeconomic status and low athletic level intersect with the non-Olympic identity, constricting the opportunities for athletes pursuing their excellence in sport.

One of the challenges of being constructed by the low socioeconomic status and low athletic level is balancing the demands in and out of sport. The material stresses that derives from these subordinated identities hindered the development of athletes. Without the effective coping strategies and social support, they are at risk losing a sense of control of their lives, and lead to a variety of physical (i.e., injury, illness) and mental distress (i.e., burnout) (Raedeke & Smith, 2004). In this project, one of the athletes demonstrated the negative responses to work and sport stress, without addressing any effective coping strategies and social support. She consequently injured and exhausted herself. In her story, she failed to manage her life due to not being supported by the administration, both in money and training sense. She had to work to support her boxing career, to find the professional resources her own, and to manage work and competition, all of which negatively influenced her sport performance and then depowered her when compared to other privileged athletes.

The second challenge hindering non-Olympic and low athletic levels athletes was being disconnected with the administration. As the most periphery of athletes, the non-Olympic athletes reported that they receive least attention and investment than the Olympic weight category athletes or the promising athletes in the non-Olympic weight categories from the organization. From their words, the power was centralized in the administration, Boxing Canada, where they can make decisions for athletes' career development. Sport development is a far more complex and encompassing process than working hard to achieve the physical and psychological best for individual athlete.

Wylleman et al. (2004) developed a lifespan model reflecting the concurrent, interactive, and reciprocal nature of athletes' development in four domains (athletic, psychological, psychological, academic/vocational). They emphasized developing athletes as a whole person. Henriksen et al. (2010) proposed a holistic ecological model to represent the complexity of talent development in the real world. Within the structured model, the authors sketched out the environments as micro- (i.e., family, peers, and school) and macro- (i.e., the sailing federation, educational system, mass media, national culture, and sport subculture), non-athletic domain vs. athletic domain. In the current study, the non-Olympic athletes' sport development was constrained by the hierarchical sport structure and policies. Other than the unawareness of Olympic athletes, the non-Olympic athletes expressed that the disconnection with the administration, and having fewer competitions for them to participate in, strengthened their inferior status on the team. A few non-Olympic athletes complained about the administration only seeing athletes in athletic aspect rather than as a whole person, and the decision-making process was not clear. The athletes recognized they were just members of the organization and being passively

shaped by the system towards the gold medal (see Figure 9). These were all contradictory with the claimed athlete-centered governing approach of the sport system as explained in the previous text, and the different treatments between Olympic and non-Olympic athletes. One of the athletes shared the story of being cut off from the World Championship without any reliable explanations, which led her to burnout. Gardner (2011) found that the efficiency of the decision process, the inherent power balance between athletes and national sport organizations, and the opportunities to voice contributed to athletes' sense of fairness are arbitrary in the Canadian sport system. Thus, the above case indicated the large power asymmetry between the marginalized athletes and the organization.

The third challenge that the athletes presented relating to the socioeconomic status, weight category, and athletic levels was the team dynamics. The administrative division of Olympic and non-Olympic athletes destroyed the team cohesion by creating the hierarchical status and inequality within. In the previous literature, researchers have found the inequality could distance team members from one another, as the lower-status members found their traits to be less desirable than others (Locke, 2003). Christie and Barling (2010) conducted a longitude research on the influences of status on the team of NBA players' performance and health. They found team members acting uncooperatively. The status inequality on the team decreased the performance and increased absences from work because of ill physical health for those with lower status. Inequality influences athletes' wellbeing by altering perceptions of social support that help alleviate stress. Boxing is an individual sport, and in most occasions, athletes perform uncooperative tasks. Thus, the status of inequality on the team would bring more

pressures to the low status athletes. In the current research, the non-Olympic athletes confirmed the destructive trajectory as relative low status distanced them from Olympic athletes, resulting in fewer opportunities to compete, and led to higher stress for competing due to payment disparities. The athletes who need to work would only get close to the teammates who shared the same lifestyle, and keep silent about their money issues. The income hierarchy depowered the low-status athletes by adding the financial and social pressures for them to cope with alone. However, the disparities between high and low status athletes were performed implicitly, where the low status athletes stressed that their dissatisfaction was towards the organization rather than the high-status athletes.

The last part of the vignette presents the stories of how the life-priority shifted for the athletes, especially for those low status athletes, who were aged and have gloomy prospects in the sport career. Due to sport careers being one of the earliest and shortest careers that one can take, and the commitments to reach and stay at the top of elite sport, requires elite athletes and those around them to invest at multiple levels (e.g., physical, social, financial) during long periods of time (Baker, Horton, Robertson-Wilson, & Wall, 2003; Wylleman, et al., 2004). Retirement is a significant event for athletes. Wylleman et al. (2004) suggested that athletes are vulnerable to experiencing a range of difficulties following retirement including: depression, identity crises, alcohol/substance abuse and eating disorders. Thus, preparing for retirement is the main task for sport psychology practitioners. In the current study, the various identities that were constructed in different life situations for athletes, be it in or post sport careers, were investigated. In many countries around the world, most elite athletes manage a tight schedule to manage sport-educational or sport-vocational lives (e.g., Durand- Bush & Salmela, 2002; Tshube &

Feltz, 2015). Rather than viewing dual careers as a developmental challenge, some researchers demonstrated the mutual benefits of the dual career. Durand-Bush and Salmela reported that many student athletes found schooling as an integral part of their lives, which complemented their athletics. Tshube and Feltz (2015) suggested athletes who have part-time or full-time jobs would have a better transition to retirement and post-career adaptation. In the present research, the participants also reported a similar finding. For the non-Olympic athletes, as there were fewer chances for them to live on sport, most of them took vocation or school whilst pursuing sport. From the athletes' recounts, they shifted priorities back and forth between sport and non-sport careers as their competition schedules and life changed. When the competition season is close, the athletes spend more time in boxing. For the athletes starting a family (i.e., having a daughter), they shift away from sport and focus on other aspects of their lives, minimizing their boxing identity. These all reflect athletes who are shifting between multiple identities. Instead of viewing sport and non-sport life separately, the athletes' lives are holistic and dynamic. The importance and meanings of multiple lives are related to the athletes' multiple identities and influenced by culture. McGannon and Schinke (2013) analyzed the determinants of physical participation for mothers of young children and found that the culturally constructed mother identity (e.g., good mothers place children's needs over their own) made physical activity participation difficult. In the current research, one athlete shifted her priority to work after having a family. For her, when the family was fine, everything was fine. In her story, the time, fatigue and the family became the barriers to her sport development. On the other side, the athlete constructed education as a compensation for the subordination of her athletic identity. In her perspective, getting

education could be used against the stereotype that boxers are uneducated. The athlete used the education identity to challenge the traditional culturally constructed athletic identity, and gain a higher self-esteem.

7.2 General Discussion

The third intersection was framed by socioeconomic status, athletic level, and weight categories. Comparing these two vignettes in this chapter, the different experiences and challenges of the centralized athletes and marginalized athletes are presented. The power asymmetry embedded in these three identities are more obvious than the aforementioned two since each of them represents social, material, and political capitals that are deemed meaningful to athletes' career developments. These three identities made up the hierarchies on the team. The hierarchies, on one hand, make the system effective and motivates athletes to seek success, targeting specific weight divisions. On the other hand, the system also led to significant oppressions for certain athletes who are unable to meet these yardsticks, perhaps effecting the overall team's synergy. The intersecting effect of these three identities manifest as presenting different challenges and situations for the high-status athletes and the low-status athletes in their career development. In contrast to the non-Olympic athletes, the Olympic athletes are more likely to have a stunning career as they receive far more support from the sport system. However, the higher and more complex demands from in and out of sport expose more challenges for them to cope and they must construct themselves with different identities. For the low status athletes, especially for those who are less financial established, they need to work to pay for their competitions, and so, they cannot really become full-time amateur athletes. The high investment and little payback led to further

burnout and withdrawing from sport. To present the contextual meanings of these identities of athletes in different career/life stages, I unfolded two typical storylines that represented different realities faced by athletes based on their identities. The first one portrayed athletes who are born in the ghetto and then became superstars in boxing. The second one focused on the non-Olympic athletes who are marginalized by the administration and strive to balance work-sport conflicts. Within these two vignettes, multiple identity transitions in athletes' career development are presented: in-career transition (i.e., from junior to senior), dual-career transition (i.e., work and sport), and post-career transition (i.e., retirement). Both positive and negative implications of the aforementioned identities in the transitions, to athletes' sport experiences and personal well-being, were discussed, wherein the athletes' identities developed.

The challenges athletes had in their transitions and sport careers also reflect the bureaucratic and pragmatic approaches that are found to be dominant in the national sport system. The bureaucracy manifested in how the administration possessed the decisive power for athletes' participation in international competition and training camps. The pragmatism manifested in non-Olympic athletes who received less support from coaches and the administrators as they were considered less valuable in contrast to Olympic athletes. These two approaches reinforce the disadvantageous status for athletes who are already being marginalized, and reproduce the result-oriented or performance discourses in the sport system. Instead of being known as a holistic person, athletes complain that they are like productions or employees of the national sport institution, which externalized their passion of boxing and broke their sense of belonging with the team.

Due to the limited funds and having to obey the instruction and policies from the higher organization-IAAF or Olympic Committee, the bureaucratic and hierarchical system structure was hard to be transited. Due to being situated in the hierarchical organizational structures and lack of effective communications with the administration, the athletes, especially for the non-Olympic athletes, were suppressed to express stresses outside of sport. Thus, the sport psychology practitioners could function as a facilitator, helping athletes to voice their concerns to the administration. On the other hand, supporters can take the responsibility of humanistic attention to athletes and focus their individual developments for the organization. Through doing this, sport psychology could compensate the shortage of the hierarchical organizational structure and bridge the organizational development with the athletes' developments.

Chapter Eight

This chapter provides an overview of the academic and practical level contributions made through the current research, summarises the main findings of the research, and reveals implications of future CSP research. Emphasis will first be placed on the findings in relation to the research questions posed at the outset of the project, coming full-circle in the research process. Second, through highly contextualized and experiential accounts, the research generated in-depth understandings of intersecting identities in the sport context. The knowledge is highlighted as a conduit for action, opening up opportunities for attending social justice issues in sport. I summarized five major conclusions of this research, deriving from the implications, recommendations, and interventions of how sport institutions can better support athletes and enhance their sport experiences are provided. Third, I addressed how the interdisciplinary approach facilitated a more meaningful and comprehensive understandings of the sport phenomena, which illuminates future practices. Finally, the limitation and implications of how this research contributed to the CSP scholarship by integrating the intersectionality framework to reveal the diversity of athletes. In addition, ideas to advance social justice through centralizing the marginalized athletes and identities were presented, with the effort to encourage more progressive CSP research that is aligned with the change-enhancing agenda of cultural praxis.

8.1 Generating Knowledge about Intersectionality of Athletes' Identities

In response to the call of focusing on the cultural diversity of athletes in sport psychology (Gill, et al., 1990; Kamphoff, et al., 2010; Stambulova, et al., 2013; Schinke & McGannon, 2015) and viewing the athlete as a holistic person rather than just being an

athlete (Henriksen, 2015; Rokainen, et al., 2016; Wylleman et al., 2004), this research was conducted to investigate how the multiple social identities shape athletes into who they are and construct the meanings of their sport lives. Aligned with the social constructionism epistemology, this research conceptualized identities as sociocultural products that are narratively constructed and performed according to the contexts (e.g. Carless, 2008; Smith & Sparks, 2009; McGannon & Smith, 2015). Athletes with various social identities are situated in multiple social realities, and form different psyches to live through. To delineate the complexity and multiplicity of athletes, the intersectionality framework was integrated into the research (Hulko, 2009). As a sociological method, intersectionality framework demonstrates the validity in explaining the diversity of people and the hierarchical power relations of identities in certain sociocultural contexts.

As one of the first empirical researches that utilizes the intersectionality framework to examine athletes' diverse identities in a certain sport context systematically in sport psychology, the current project followed the rationale of CSP (Blodgett et al., 2014; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Schinke & McGannon, 2015), generating the localized knowledge of how the national female boxers storied the challenges and inclusions in sport related to their intersecting identities. Nine identities were identified based on the life stories shared by ten female boxers on the Canadian National Boxing Team. They are gender, sexuality, physicality, race and ethnicity, language, religion, socioeconomic status, weight category, and athletic level. To facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the intersections among the nine social identities, the identities are coalesced into three sets: gender-sexuality-physicality (see Chapter 5); race and ethnicity-language-religion (see Chapter 6); and socioeconomic status-weight category-athletic level (see

Chapter 7). The three sets of identities revealed the different aspects of athletes and the fluidity of their identities within different cultural contexts. In the first intersection of identities, the distinctive stories of being female athletes with various sexualities and physical types fitting into the masculine context were presented. As being females entering a male-dominant sport, most female boxers expressed the role conflicts. Some were excluded or devalued by male teammates and coaches due to the gender identity. Some needed to negotiate themselves between masculinity and femininity to gain the acceptance within both the masculine sport culture and the patriarchal mainstream society. However, these experiences are less resonant with female queer athletes than with other feminine or heterosexual athletes. They storied more acceptances towards them in this masculine context than in the larger society. Compared to the heterosexual or feminine athletes, the queer athletes, they would be less concerned about defending their femininity, but they uniquely struggled with being undressed (or openly talking about their sexuality) in front of their teammates.

In the second intersection of identities, the identities of race/ethnicity, language, and religion are centralized respectively, with other identities intertwined within each. Through the intergroup analysis, I emphasized the power relations that pertain to different identities and their influences of team dynamics. The whiteness privilege is illustrated intersecting with language and religion. Evidence shows that racial minority athletes are differentiating themselves from the majority team members, which was reinforced through language practices. In contrasting with the widely accepted Christian beliefs and practices in boxing, the Muslim athletes are excluded from coaches' attention in Ramadan. The diversity of race/ethnicity, language, and religion impact the team

dynamics as athletes categorized themselves and constructed a multitude of sameness and differences from others.

In the third set of identities, the institutional and political inequalities are highlighted for the athletes who are excluded from the Olympic weight categories and being marginalized in the organization. Socioeconomic status, weight category, and athletic levels intersect with each other, shaping athletes' career developing paths and shedding a light on athletes' identity change in multiple transitions. The pragmatic organizational approach is criticized as its medal-orientated system denounces athletes as whole person.

The project generated five research conclusions relating to the intersecting social identities of athletes on the National Team, each of which was driven forward from the distinctive experiences of athletes and connects to the social justice issues of identity. In clarifying the findings of the research, it is important to briefly summarize what was learned and how to apply the results.

8.1.1 Conclusion one: athletes are multifaceted cultural beings. Rather than viewing athletes as a homogenous group of people who are narrowly focused on sport performance, this project made an effort to reveal the diversity of athletes and their multiple aspects of lives. Through the lens of social identities, athletes are understood as multifaceted cultural beings, who are constructed by multiple culturally informed identities simultaneously, such as gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, education, religion, physicality, language, and others. In this project, these identities are conceptualized as the process or products of cultural narratives, wherein athletes continuously negotiate themselves with the multiple narratives and their embedded values, norms, and practices

to get a sense of themselves and to fit into the social expectations as well. Thus, these multiple identities altogether constitute the meanings of the world that athletes situate in through language, which turns out to be the various values, habits, motivations, and acts in sport.

Implication. Acknowledging the complexity and multiplicity of athletes is important for sport psychology practitioners and coaches to understand athletes as unique individuals, who are not only performing in sport but also in other aspects of life. Moreover, it is usually the lives out of sport that contributes to athletes' sport performance and career development. For example, the contradictory expectations of being a female and being a boxer would prevent females from participating in this masculine combat sport. Knowing the multiple social identities of athletes also stimulates the reflexivity of coaches and sport practitioners in coaching and counselling. Through aware of the differences between athletes' and their own stands, coaches and sport psychology practitioners could show more respect towards athletes, and generate athlete-centered instructions, and intervention strategies. Attending to the multiple aspects of athletes' lives could also enrich the narratives in sport other than narrowly focusing on the performance narratives, which was demonstrated as dysfunctional for athletes' long-term development and reproducing the inequality of sport (Douglas, 2009; Krane, 2007).

Recommendation. To understand the multiplicity of athletes, coaches and sport psychology practitioners should consider the culturally constructed meanings of these identities to athletes, and how they negotiate them with the sport subculture. For example, for the female athletes who are in low socioeconomic status, boxing might empower her by making her physically strong, getting recognitions from entourage, and moving her up

to a better life status. However, the masculine context of boxing contradicts with the traditional ideal image of female, and also brings lesbian stigma for her. Thus, how to help the boxer negotiate with her multiple meanings of boxing and keep her motivated to stay and perform in this sport would be important to delve.

Intervention. To support athletes in terms of their multiple identities, there are different highlights for coaches and sport psychology practitioners respectively. For coaches, contextually balancing the principals of treating athletes equally and treating athletes differently is needed. Coaches should implement the same standards for athletes when they developing sport skills, meanwhile, view them differently in terms of their cultural background varies. In practice, coaches should firstly, avoid use the language potentially exclude or depower certain identity groups of athletes, such as females should not fight, boxing is a man's sport, or making the derogatory joke toward gays. Secondly, coaches should be aware of differences among athletes with different identities, such as Olympic weight category athletes have different pressure than non-Olympic weight category athletes. Thirdly, coaches should be aware of the living consequences of the multiple identities to athletes, and help them develop into a better person through sport, such as creating personal career developing plan for non-Olympic weight category athletes to manage time and training, to achieve their personal maximum goals.

For sport psychology practitioners, while delving into the personal problems athletes encounter, one needs to understand the values, norms, and practices that athletes may learn from their complex cultural backgrounds and the sport contexts, and the problems could be also derived from complicate reasons related to their cultural background. As identities are narrative constructions, athletes may suffer from

negotiating the contradictory meanings of multiple identities and the changings of significant events. At this time, sport psychology practitioners should help athletes unify the multiple identities, and regain a sense of who they are in frustrations. For example, in the case that female athletes struggle by identity conflicts between keeping femininity sense of self and pursuing boxing, sport psychology practitioners should identify and encourage them to explore and create a flexible sense of self, such as athletic femininity, in and out of the sport, and help them adapt to the sport and mainstream culture.

8.1.2 Conclusion two: the intersecting social identities situate athletes within the interlocking power relations. The multiple identities of athletes are not separated from each other, rather they are reciprocally constructing the meanings of each other (Collins, 2015). Furthermore, these identities are not equal and value-free. Certain identities are more privileged than their oppositions in particular contexts, and within them, certain norms and values that are privileged and have more power than others. For example, sports are a male dominant area, where there are strong social codes for acceptable behaviour of male and female athletes, hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity (Krane, 2007). Those who conform to the privileged form of values and identities garner social rewards and power. Conversely, those who deviate from the norms endure the social pressures and oppression. No one is just privileged or oppressed (Jordan-Zachery, 2007), thus the intersecting social identities situate athletes into interlocking power systems (Collins, 2015).

Implication. The power relations create the identity hierarchies for athletes in sports, with certain identities granting privileges. For example, the hegemonic masculinity that is pervasive in certain sports privileges the white, middle-class,

heterosexual, educated, physical muscular, males who are brave, risk-taking, aggressive, and tough (Messner et al., 2000). The hierarchy excludes other forms of identities and behaviours, such as females, disabled, colored, homosexual athletes and the intimate interactions between the same sex athletes. The athletes that are in the subordinate groups have to hide or submit themselves to get accepted in the certain sport context. For example, black athletes have to adjust the way they speak just to fit into the white norms. Meanwhile, sportswomen must balance the traits that are essential for athletic success with the presentation of an acceptable appearance conforming to the hegemonic feminine norms of society (Krane, 2001). The power relations of different identity groups also create the divisions and conflicts on the team, if not manage as well, thus the subordinate group members' confidence and motivation would be harmed (i.e. Hinds, et al., 2014).

Recommendations. Rather than taken it for granted, coaches and sport psychology practitioners should be aware of the current normative values and practices that are pervasive in sport, privileging certain identity groups while marginalized others. The identity oppressions are usually invisible as the privileged group members would not understand the difficulties and the subordinate group members would rather hide their differences or keep silent. Sport psychology practitioners and coaches should build up a cultural inclusive sport environment to embrace the diversity of athletes and to facilitate the team dynamics. By empowering the subordinate group athletes in sport, such as homosexual athletes, low socioeconomic status athletes, and master athletes, we could further contribute to the social justice agenda in terms of identity inequalities.

Interventions. To build up a culturally inclusive sport environment and to facilitate the team dynamics, coaches and sport psychology practitioners should be aware

of the power imbalance among the different identity groups. For coaches, one could use his or her authority to consciously group athletes with diverse identities for cooperating tasks, to facilitate the communication and understanding between athletes of different identity groups, wherein the contributions of each athletes should be encouraged.

Through these acts, the cultural minority athlete or subordinate athletes would have a chance to express themselves. In coaching, coaches should leave room for the cultural minorities or subordinate athletes to negotiate their training habits. For example, the Anglophone boxers find it hard to understand the Francophone coach's instructions in the ring, then it would be helpful if the Francophone coaches could exchange the meanings of the instruction with athletes before the competition, and use the phrase as simple as possible to help athletes understand, and more importantly, to make them feel being respected.

To empower the cultural minorities or subordinate athletes, sport psychology practitioners should help the individual athletes be aware of the oppression of the normative values and practices to them on the team, generating strategies to help express themselves in appropriate ways to contest the oppressive power, rather than submitting to it. As a result of being cultural minorities and subordinated, athletes are likely to submit themselves to the privileged norms, thus sport psychology practitioners should be highly careful in their belittled identities to protect their feelings and to gain trust. Also, sport psychology practitioners should offer unconditional support for the subordinated athletes to express their identities, and explore the positive meanings of their identities.

8.1.3 Conclusion three: power and significance of identities are contingent on time and context. Intersectionality of identities and interlocking oppressions are time

and context contingent, rather than fixed and ahistorical (Hulko, 2009). The meanings of identities are fluid and relative, such as people who construct themselves between the continuum of femininity and masculinity depending on the context. The power and significance of the identities, and their derived privilege and subordinate status are shifting across different historical and sociocultural context. For example, race is regarded as powerful and significant in North America while class is a more significant in China. The social identities become the most salient ones when they are threatened (Hurtado, 1997); For example, race is significant to black people than to white people when in the white context. As people occupy multiple identities simultaneously, the varied configuration of identities complicates the power dynamics and lead to different psychological consequences. In some spaces, they are more likely to feel accepted and valued than they do in other spaces (Valentine, 2007).

Implication. Athletes' sense of self is changing along with the time and place, which implicates the multiple transition experience within sport. In the first case, the meanings and power of identities are fluid across the context. For example, lesbian or queer identities are oppressed by the mainstream heteronormativity culture, but compatible with the masculine culture in boxing. Therefore, in the boxing gym, lesbian boxers illustrate being more powerful and confident about themselves to train and perform. However, when they were undressed with other female boxers in the changing room, they became conservative and uneasy to express themselves due to being afraid of being regarded as a sexual threat. In the second case, the identities of athletes are evolving as they develop in sport. For example, athletes progressed into the National

Team, entitling a new identity as a National Team boxer, which brought them more self-respect and self-worth.

Recommendations. Coaches and sport psychology practitioners should understand athletes are not always the same. In certain contexts or phases, they are more powerful and comfortable than in others. In the degrading contexts, athletes would be depowered and constrained to express themselves. To engage in different contexts, athletes perform their identities strategically to gain power, such as female boxers who avoid dressing femininely when training in the gym while projecting femininity when out of boxing to gain the social capital. The context change also brings new challenges for athletes to adapt to. For example, when athletes transition from junior to senior level, higher capacities and more coping resources are needed to meet the new physical, psychological, social, and vocational demands. Coaches and sport psychology practitioners should help athletes get prepared for dealing with multiple transitions.

Interventions. Understanding the time – and context – contingent nature of athletes' intersecting identities would help coaches and practitioners take a flexible and adaptive view towards athletes. For coaches, rather than categorizing athletes into static trait groups, such as extrovert or introvert athletes, the contextual understanding toward athletes' presentations and behaviors are suggested, such as what makes athletes reserve or revolt. In dealing with the transfer athletes (who are just involved in one's program) or rookies, coaches should leave time and space for athletes to adjust, opening team situations to help them recognize their positions and contribution to the team.

For sport psychology practitioners, understanding the intersectionality of identities is a path to facilitate athletes transit into a new phase or new context smoothly

and successfully. Sport psychology practitioners could consult with athletes in narrating their life stories in the old and new phase or context (past/present self vs. present/future self) to build the coherence of the narrative selves. Meanwhile, the identity privilege and oppression within each context should be reflected, where athletes can find the cue to reconstruct themselves to develop and gain the power of identity. For example, the athletes who transition from junior to senior team will find a loss in power as the demands are high in the new context. Sport psychology practitioners should help them reformulate their ways to present themselves and fit into the new team role.

8.1.4 Conclusion four: athletes construct the world differently according to their identity positions. There is no singular “truth” of social phenomena that exists outside of people’s mind. People live in the world differently based on their own individual experience and knowledge. Easta (2003) used a kaleidoscope metaphor to explain the various constructions of the world. The metaphor describes the intersecting identities of people serve as the “multitude of filters” (p.1) that help them make sense of the world. According to their individual experience and knowledge that is based on these social identities, people assign the “meanings” to each social event, which shape their psyche and then, guide their actions. In contrast to the hyper-awareness of the oppressions that is expressed by people in the contextual subordinated groups, the privileged group notoriously legitimatizes the differentiations and take their privilege status for granted or as invisible (Sue, 2006).

Implication. The heterogeneity of athletes with diverse perspectives, values, and habits on the team result in the communication gap between the subordinate athletes and those privilege ones. The concerning issues of each identity group are various, which

creates discrepancies of attitudes and reactions toward particular social events among athletes and usually, the disadvantages of subordinated groups are silenced or being legitimated. For example, in talking about the language division on the team, the Francophone thought the two language groups get along well with each other while the Anglophone athletes emphasized the communication barriers with Francophone teammates and coaches; The white athletes dismissed the race influence to their sport performance, while the black athletes were frustrated by the derogatory comments related race to them. Furthermore, the Olympic full-time athletes could not understand how the non-Olympic part-time boxers could work and fight at the same time. The team dynamics are influenced by the lack of mutual understandings among athletes, or between athletes and coaches, which further isolates the minority athletes on the team.

Recommendations. As to managing the differences on the team, sport psychology practitioners and coaches should, on one side, be reflexive of their own identities in relation to athletes; on the other hand, facilitate the mutual understandings among athletes to reduce the conflicts and to strengthen the team integration. Increasing communication is one of the principal methods that contribute to the team bindings, through which the overall image of the problems and the power relations of different identities on the team can be revealed. By articulating their own perspectives, the marginalized athletes would be empowered and the power asymmetry would be balanced, more or less. As some perspectives and identities are pervasive in sports, sport psychology practitioners and coaches should also put extra attention on the marginalized athletes and their concerns.

Interventions. To engage athletes with different social identities, coaches need to be aware of that they are living in the different world from his or hers, and to listen more

about athletes' personal needs and perspectives. In coaching, rather than refusing or judging athletes' preferences that different from theirs, coaches should practice more understandingly and make room for athletes to express and negotiate their own understandings of the existing norms, especially for the minority athletes or those who are normally marginalized ones.

For the sport psychology practitioners, they need to facilitate intergroup dialog among different social identity groups and build relationships across cultural and power differences (Nagda & Gurin, 2007). They could open workshops or organize reflective meetings among athletes and coaches for particular topics or specific problem solving. Through this practice, the consciousness of inequalities on the team could be raised, the similarities and differences in experiences across identity groups could be elicited, and individual and collective capacities to promote social justice could be strengthened. To empower the marginalized athletes who have difficulties in negotiating their own identities with the predominant norms, rather than submitting their identities to the dominant values or practices, sport psychology practitioners should assist them, refreshing the problem and manage the environment strategically. For example, for the black athletes who struggle by submitting herself to the white way of speaking and feeling lonely on the team, sport psychology should confirm either race identity or language identity of her, and support her by presenting the identity intersection she preferred.

8.1.5 Conclusion five: The athletes and the subculture of sport interactively constitute each other. From the cultural constructionist perspective, people and culture interactively constitute each other. People draw on prevailing cultural narratives to

construct themselves, to seek the meanings of their lives, to express themselves and direct their future actions (McAdams, 2011). Moreover, the social and economic system and cultural norms constrain individuals to perform their identities in particular way. To make their way through the hostile territory and to gain social profit, identity politics based on gender, race, class, sexuality et al. played out for the individuals to assert and reclaim ways of understanding their distinctiveness. They require more personal resources and a heightened awareness (Cote, 1996). Consequently, the predominant oppressive characterizations of certain social groups have been challenged and changed, then the culture in certain context is reconstituted.

Implications: The dynamic change of sport culture creates a rather inclusive space for recruiting diverse athlete and identities, and through which sport manifests as an arena challenging the dominant social hierarchies and promoting social justice. The physical practices and competitive environment of sport empower athletes to become better selves. Conversely, the athletes' participation and performance change the sport context as well. For example, the female athletes reported more confidence and discipline for practicing boxing. As the marginalized group of the hegemonic masculine context, these female boxers earned respect and recognition through achieving goals and proper presentation of their gender identity, creating the athletic femininity image to reconcile with the conflicts between masculine sport culture and hegemonic femininity. The plasticity and fluidity of the culture of sport also provides opportunities of sport psychology practitioners and coaches, creating a more justice and adaptive sport cultures for athletes to improve. Meanwhile, by supporting the marginalized athletes to express themselves, the dominant cultural system could be reflected and challenged. For the

queer athletes, intersex athletes, and transsexual athletes, by revealing their concerns and problems, sport psychology practitioners could facilitate the change of dominant binary gender system in sport.

Recommendations. To build up a more cultural inclusive context for athletes to participate and compete in, coaches and sport psychology practitioners might use a malleable view to understand the relationship between athletes and sport. Sport psychology practitioners and coaches should be critical about the doctrine of ideal images or prototypes of success athletes in certain sports. They should, instead, be open spaces for athletes who are not that accommodated with the norms and ideological standards (i.e. ideal categories of age, physical type, gender, personality). Sport psychology practitioners and coaches should facilitate the advancement of sport subculture as well as the larger cultural context. By taking the humanity and social justice into consideration, when dealing with the sport and psychological issues, they could form better strategies to improve athletes' holistic development, and direct them to become better citizens.

Interventions. To build up a culturally inclusive sport environment, sport psychology practitioners and coaches should, firstly, be aware of the taken-for-granted oppressive discourses in traditional cultural ideologies, such as “boxing is a man’s sport,” “boxers must be strong and muscular,” and use more cultural inclusive language, such as “boxing is for everyone,” and “there is no perfect type of body for boxing.” Secondly, sport practitioners and coaches should consciously facilitate the formation of inclusive culture and avoid the monopoly of certain cultural ideologies on the team. For example, instead of taking the physical and mental dualistic perspective for granted, sport psychology practitioners and coaches should realize and tolerate other forms of

ideologies in understanding human's wellbeing, such as spiritual and emotional (which are endorsed by the Canadian aboriginal athletes). Lastly, sport psychology practitioners and coaches should encourage the marginalized and minority athletes to express their own identity, and to challenge the predominating norms. Through these practices, athletes who fall out of the ideal image could be empowered and attended.

8.2 Reflections: Doing an Interdisciplinary Research

CSP research is open to multiple theories, epistemologies, methodologies and areas (Ryba & Schinke, 2009). This interdisciplinary approach largely broadens the researcher's horizons by stepping out of the mono discipline to use more flexible methods to delineate the details of problems.

The term "interdisciplinarity" emerged in the 1920's, in reaction to the 20th century problems of knowledge organization (Moran, 2014). In interdisciplinary research, searching for applications that have taken the place of searching for basic laws, the university is no longer the only organization producing knowledge. Meanwhile, disciplines are no longer the crucial frames of orientation for the delineation of subject matters and the formulation of research problems (Weingart, 2010). Interdisciplinarity is characterized as problem-focused, more interested in breadth over depth of knowledge, and integration (Turner, 2000). Repko (2012) defined it as:

a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline and draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights to produce a more comprehensive understanding or cognitive advancement (p12).

Complexity is regarded as not only the quantity of units and interactions of information, but also “uncertainty, indetermination, and random phenomena”. Weingart (2000) regarded it as creativity, progress, reform, and modernization, as well as dynamic, flexible, liberal, and innovative.

This project is a narrow endogenous interdisciplinary research (see Klein, 2010), where I took the conceptions, theories, and methods from psychology, sociology, anthropology, management, cultural studies, and feminist studies. The major challenges of amalgamating the theories and perspectives emerge in the literature review and interpretations of the findings.

Being a student who branded the post positivist psychological thinking, I found it is very difficult to switch to the sociological or feminist lens. Even though there are various ethos of psychology- psychoanalysis, behaviourism, and humanism, humans are always the central subjects of research. they are taken as the homogenous creature that shares the same mental process, including cognition, emotion, motivation, and actions. In psychological research, human behaviors are explained by the inner mechanics. The basic assumption is that humans have the agency and intellect to change and develop themselves continuously. However, in sociology and cultural studies of literature, human's psyches are various according to the culture they are situated in. Human behaviors are explained by the larger sociocultural context, and the humans' agency is questioned. The discrepancies of the base assumptions of human agency brought a lot of challenges to me as I analyzed the data. For example, the black athletes suffered from the black stereotypes, and I tended to view it as individual cognitive disorder rather than as the social phenomenon of whiteness culture differentiating non-white groups. The

arguments of sociology, cultural studies, and feminist studies focus on the social inequalities and power asymmetry, with the ultimate aim of promoting social justice. While in psychology, the researchers' goal is to improve human happiness. In sociology, people's freewill is limited and shaped by sociocultural, while in psychology, people are autonomously to become who they are and what they want to be. The latter idea absolutely constructed more happier and justice filled world to live with. However, the perspectives from sociology and cultural studies extend the original horizons of researchers. I resisted to accept the sociological ideas for a long time. After immersing into the project for three years, the sociological eyes to understand and interpret the world was gradually replaced with the previous psychological one. Then I could reconcile with the different ideas, and start to feel comfortable with this project.

In writing the results and discussion of this project, I moved between sociological, psychological databases to justify my findings. The messy, fragmented, long-winded, angry, lack of logic and conceptual level writings discomforts me as I used to, and much prefer to, the certain, neat, logical and evidential research styles. Hitherto, due to most psychology researches, are still used to the post-positivist approach to understand the sport phenomena. There are few studies taking the cultural studies and feminist approach. For the limited few, it is hard to separate them with the sport sociology literature. Thus, when citing articles related to this research, I need to reinterpret the findings. Many of post-positivist studies in psychology were abandoned as the epistemological misaligned, even though they were exploring something similar with the current project. To translate the sociological arguments into psychological language and build the connection between social phenomenon to athletes' behaviours is another challenge. The sociological

conceptions of power, privilege, oppression, identity politics, and cultural praxis need to be carefully explained and related to the psychological scholarship.

8.3 The Limitations and Implications for Future CSP Research

In response to the call to expand intersectionality in CSP research (Schinke & McGannon, 2015), this research stands as a contribution toward further developing the knowledge around understanding the cultural diversity of athletes and how the multiple identities were included and excluded in the certain sport setting. This work builds upon previous work that has focused on one or two, or three socially constructed identities of athletes (e.g. Blodgett et al., 2011, McGannon & Schinke, 2013; McGannon, Curtin, Schinke, & Schweibenz, 2012; Ryba, Rokainen, & Selänne, 2015; Ronkainen, Ryba, & Nesti, 2013; Ryba, Stambulova, Selänne, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2017, Sarkar, Hill, & Parker, 2015), and the presents research that has identified multiple identities that are meaningful to Canadian National Team athletes' sport experience and wellbeing. The goal is to build upon previous work by centralizing multiple aspects of athletes' cultural identities within one sport context (i.e., Canadian National boxing team). To build upon previous work, there are implications and limitations in the current findings for the future CSP research as revealed below.

Following the rationale of CSP, this research kept focusing on the marginalized athletes and promoting the cultural inclusive and justice sport environment for everyone to participate and compete in. Through using an intersectionality framework from feminist studies, athletes' social identities come to the fore, representing how the multiple aspects of athletes are privilege or oppressed in certain sport context. The contributions of this research to CSP include: a) expanding empirical work on cultural diversity in sport,

through which athletes are viewed as a whole person rather than just athletes; b) expanding the theoretical foundation of CSP by integrating social constructionism with an intersectionality framework; c) combining the sport psychology practices with a social justice agenda, which aims to highlight existing problems in the field, and make recommendations for future sport psychology research. In this research, I highlighted the aspects of sport that created an unequal place for people to hone their competence and compete with others. Rather than focusing on the mental and physical characteristics as is often the case with sport psychology work, I explored athletes' success and failure to the unequal cultural ideologies and system structures, from which the strategies about how to improve the system were generated. In this sense, this research complied with the current cultural and holistic trend (Ryba et al., 2013; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010; Stambulova, et al., 2009; Schinke & McGannon, 2014) in sport psychology and links it to the cultural level to analyze the interactions between athletes and the multi-layered environment. Such analysis adds to previous critical constructionist work in sport psychology as well as cultural studies of sport, which has for many years explored cultural inequality and marginalization in sport. Next, the limitations of this research are outlined along with future research recommendations.

The first limitation is about the rigor of this research. The current research relies on the relativism to justify the rigor. They are the aesthetics of the project, reflexivity, whether the vignettes clarify the topic of intersectionality within athletes' social, and impact (Sparkes & Douglas, 2007). These criteria only focus on the quality of the general aspects of research, rather than being specific to data collection and analysis processes. In the data collection, two interviewers were employed to interview Anglophone and

bilingual athletes, and Francophone athletes, respectively. Due to the different backgrounds of these two interviewers, the interviews in English and French came out in different ways with different highlights. Considering this study is a constructionism project, it is reasonable to have multiple realities that are constructed within the interactions of the athletes and interviewers. However, the interacting processes of the interviews are not included in the analysis. The language use another aspect being less concerned in rigor. Smith and McGannon (2017) problematized the misalignment of epistemology, ontology and methodology of qualitative researches. The current study was building on the relativism ontology and constructionism epistemology. However, when integrating intersectionality framework, I inevitably include a broad range of element of differences, power, and identity categories, which were narrated in post-positivist fashion. In order to being align with the epistemology, we avoided to use the conception of “experience”, and drew more attention to how the identities reciprocally constructs each other and flows among context, which may cause deviation from the previous intersectionality research and be hard to understand by the readers who are not familiar with the philosophical backgrounds of research.

The second limitation is related to the intersections of identities. Three sets of intersecting identities were developed to reduce the complexity of the intersectionality for analyzing. These identity intersection sets structure the researchers’ analysis and interpretations, which inevitably missed some other possible intersections, such as the intersections among gender, race, and socioeconomic status. As the intersections are too many to be addressed, and the meanings of each intersections varies based on the individual and context, the current settings are not the only way to cluster the identity

intersections. Furthermore, the meanings of each identity in sport are fluid through different identity intersections, which illustrates the multiple identities reciprocally constructing each other, depending on the relative contexts. All of the themes were generated across the data set, which are based on all of the participants' accounts. The result has more focus on the nuanced stories that relate to the various identity intersections, rather than the longitude implications of how the meanings of these intersecting identities change for individual athletes. The meaningful historical and contextual information are lost. For example, why and in what context the black female athlete was greatly impacted by the negative aspects of the racial stereotypes and resisted it radically; why the successful native female boxer turned to homosexuality after failing in the Olympics. In future research, case studies could be used to explore how the intersecting identities construct the world for individual athletes, and further shape the way he or she being.

The third limitation of the project is integrating the intersectionality ideologies into daily practices. As praxis study, we located the research in the Canadian National Female Boxing Team, thus the research results could be utilized in this certain sport team and context. The practical goal of this research is to build up an inclusive sport environment for athletes to enhance their sport experience and to facilitate their sport development at a high level, which is hard to be examined as it contradicts with the relativist ontology that assumes there are no existing realities. By conducting this research, the marginalized athletes' voices have been centralized, and how the power and privilege operated in the sport system is revealed. The intersection of Canadian culture, boxing subculture, and the institutional system constructs a specific power dynamics,

which is hard to described and manipulated in daily practices. For example, even though being aware of the unequal investment for the Olympic and non-Olympic athletes, the administrator and coaches cannot change the current system due to complex interest and political reasons. After the data analysis period finished, I reported part of the result to the head coaches and administrators of the Boxing Canada (Canadian National Championship, 2017, Montreal). Within this report, the subordinated identities, the team divisions (i.e. Anglophone-Francophone; Olympic- non-Olympic athletes; Administrator and coaches- athletes), and the related suggestions for refinement had been presented. As a result of the presentation, one of the Francophone non-Olympic athletes was awarded by Boxing Canada for her contribution on the Canadian National Team. Other than that, further inclusive revolutions need to be generated in a more creative way.

For the future CSP research, I propose researchers take the intersectionality framework to examine the cultural inequalities in other sport contexts, such as male boxing, or gymnastics. The different subjects and patterns of identity oppression may be found due to the respective sport subculture, such as the discriminations toward gay male boxers, and straight male gymnastic athletes. The creative strategies of how to include the marginalized athletes and the effects could be another focus. In the current study, the addressed interventions were proposed by the author without being further implemented into the real context. Thus, if the strategies could be amplified and prove effective, the knowledge could contribute to social justice through sport psychology practices. Last, the identity change in various transitions or critical events need to be attended by sport psychology researchers and practitioners. The transition (e.g. from junior to senior, being a superstar, navigate between dual careers, retire) and critical events (e.g. injury, retire,

lose significant competition) result in a variety of change in people's lives, including new networks of relationships, new behaviours, and new way of seeing oneself. The adjustment issues, identity wreckage, and personal trauma are the possible consequences of the transition process. The intersectionality approach could shed light on identity changes during these periods, and generate applicable implications for athletes, such as helping athletes develop new adaptive identities in the new environment.

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Appendices

Appendix A Participant Consent Form



Informed Consent

Study Title: The Intersecting Social Locations of Female National Team Boxers

Investigators: Robert Schinke, Diana Coholic, Kerry McGannon, and Daniel Trepanier

Study Purpose: This project provides a better understanding of what draws and keeps high-performance Canadian Female Boxers within the Canadian National Boxing Team. This scholarship will lead to more inclusive practices for athletes given cultural and background uniqueness as a performer within Canadian boxing.

Research Objective: To develop an understanding of the richness of cultural diversity in the Canadian Male and Female National Boxing Teams, by considering the cultural aspects that contributes to your performance identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, language, gender, education, and physicality). After a discussion about your drawing is completed, the following questions will be asked: (1) Tell me about how you see yourself as an athlete within the Canadian National Boxing Team; (2) Tell me about some of the challenges you have experienced in relation to yourself and sport training (3) Tell me about some of the positive things you have experienced in relation to yourself and sport training; (4) Tell me about some of the challenges you have experienced in relation to yourself and sport competition And (5) Tell me about some of the positive things you have experienced in relation to yourself and sport competition

Benefits: This project will be beneficial to you as you make sense of your cultural adaptations. The benefits from this project might include increased reflection of how you have modified your approach to belong in the team, perhaps reinforcing effective strategies. In addition, this project will inform practice and research in the area of athlete services. The final results from this project will be shared with coaches and athletes through presentations and applied publications.

Risks: The risks to you are minimal. It is possible that discussions might wander into topic areas that might be sensitive or uncomfortable to you. You are welcome to discontinue these aspects of the discussion or the broader discussion by simply indicating your discomfort. Should the researcher see that you are becoming uncomfortable, this question will be posed to you immediately and the discussion can change to something more comfortable for you or discontinue.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a two-year

project comprised of two steps as follows:

Project Demands: The project demands would be in the form of two very easy steps. In Step One, the project team will ask you to sit down for approximately two hours with a researcher to complete an art drawing that helps illustrate your identity as a boxer in the Canadian National Boxing Team (approximately 30 minutes), followed by a conversational interview where you share the most important aspects of who you are as a National Team Boxer, which are encouraged, which are discouraged, and their role in your performance (approximately 90 minutes). In Step Two, approximately two months afterward, you will be asked to review your artwork and the transcript from your interview and make any changes. In exchange, you will be compensated \$100 in a Master Card gift card after you have deemed that the interview process is completed.

Right to Withdraw from the Project: If at any point you feel uncomfortable sharing certain personal experiences during any phase of the research, you will be supported not to share those aspects or share them and indicate that whatever aspects you wish not to share beyond the interview be excluded from the project data. Further, it is your right to opt out of this project at any time with no consequence to you. You simply can indicate your wish to do so either in person or in writing – by e-mail, and your wish will be respected and supported.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: All personal identifiers will be removed from your project data to ensure anonymity. Each participant is assigned a code name and a participant number such as Participant 1. Also relating to anonymity, all names and locations will be removed from your interview transcript in advance of its return to you for authentication and analysis. This anonymous data will remain on record until five years after completion of the project (2021). Once the project data has exceeded the above timeline, it will be deleted by the lead researcher from his computer and storage device. In addition, all information you share and wish to remain confidential will not be included as data in the project.

If you have any questions about the study or whether you can or should be a participant in this project, you can call Daniel Trepanier at 613-238-7700 ext. 223 or by e-mail at the following address: dt@boxing.ca. You may contact the Laurentian University Research Officer at Research Ethics Officer at the Laurentian University Research Office, telephone: 705-675-1151 ext. 3213, 2436 or toll free at 1-800-461-4030 or email: ethics@laurentian.ca should you have any concerns pertaining to this project, the conduct of the researchers, and/or the integrity of this project.

I agree to participate in this study, and I have received a copy of this consent form:

Signature of Athlete

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix B Ethics Approval Forms



APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Research Ethics Board – Laurentian University

This letter confirms that the research project identified below has successfully passed the ethics review by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (REB). Your ethics approval date, other milestone dates, and any special conditions for your project are indicated below.

TYPE OF APPROVAL / New / Modifications to project X / Time extension X	
Name of Principal Investigator and school/department	Yang Ge, PHD candidate Human Kinetics, Supervisor, Robert Schinke, Human Kinetics
Title of Project	The Intersecting Social Locations of Female and Male National Team Boxers
REB file number	2014-06-14
Date of original approval of project	July 2, 2014
Date of approval of project modifications or extension (if applicable)	May 20, 2015 August 31 st , 2016

Final/Interim report due on: <i>(You may request an extension)</i>	July, 2017
Conditions placed on project	Report annually until completion

During the course of your research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment or consent forms may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to the Research Ethics website to complete the appropriate REB form.

All projects must submit a report to REB at least once per year. If involvement with human participants continues for longer than one year (e.g. you have not completed the objectives of the study and have not yet terminated contact with the participants, except for feedback of final results to participants), you must request an extension using the appropriate LU REB form. In all cases, please ensure that your research complies with Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS). Also please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence with the REB office.

Congratulations and best wishes in conducting your research.



Rosanna Langer, PHD, Chair, *Laurentian University Research Ethics Board*